

ASPEN
Vol. 1

#0
COVER A

MICHAEL TURNER'S
SOULFIRE
SHADOW & MAGIC





Vol. 1

#0

Cover B

MICHAEL TURNER'S
SOULFIRE
SHADOW & MAGIC



WILL
1980-2008

B. S. S.

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Founder: MICHAEL TURNER President: FRANK MASTROMAURO Vice President: PETER STEIGERWALD Editor in Chief: VINCE HERNANDEZ Editorial Assistant: JOSH REED
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MICHAEL TURNER'S SOULFIRE: SHADOW MAGIC™ Vol. 1 Issue 0

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AS MUCH AS IT
TORCHES MY SOUL TO
ADMIT, THE RAHTUMI
SHOULD NOT BE HELD
ACCOUNTABLE FOR
THEIR ACTIONS.

NO.

WE SETHORU,
HAD THE CHOICE
BEEN GIVEN TO US,
WOULD'VE SURELY
SEIZED UPON THE
OPPORTUNITY
AS WELL.

IT IS ONE OF
THE MANY THINGS I
ADORE ABOUT OUR
PEOPLE. OUR ABILITY
TO GRASP OPPORTUNITY.
OUR STRENGTH, OUR
ABILITY TO
PERSEVERE...

...AND OUR
RESOLVE.

SO
YOU SEE IT'S NOT
THE FAULT OF THEIR
COLLECTIVE RACE, BUT
RATHER, THE NATURAL
ORDER OF LIFE
GRANTING THEM SUCH
POWER AND
WEALTH.

NATURE
IS INDEED
GIVING...

...IT
HAS FINALLY
GIVEN US OUR
OPPORTUNITY.



C'MON, TELL ME... I **KNOW** SOMETHING'S BOTHERING YOU.

IS IT THAT OBVIOUS?

I KNOW YOU, **GRACE**. SOMETHING'S UP.

PFFT! YOU **THINK** YOU KNOW ME!

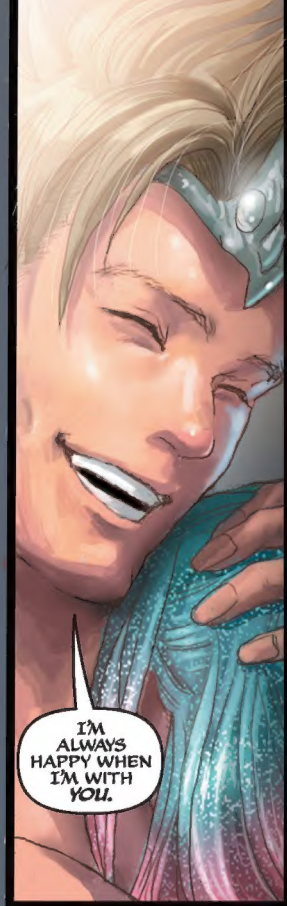
OH--

--REALLY???

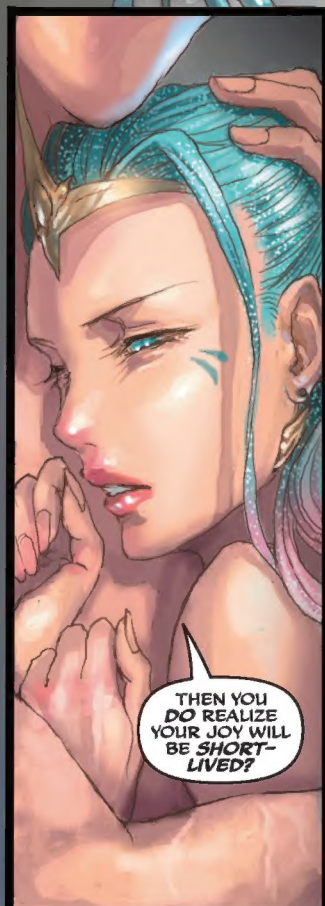
SO YOU'RE SAYING I **DON'T** KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT YOU! IS THAT WHAT YOU'RE SAYING???

STOP!
STOP! OKAY! OKAY!
I'M SORRY!!!

YOU **DO** KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT ME--
HAPPY?



I'M
ALWAYS
HAPPY WHEN
I'M WITH
YOU.



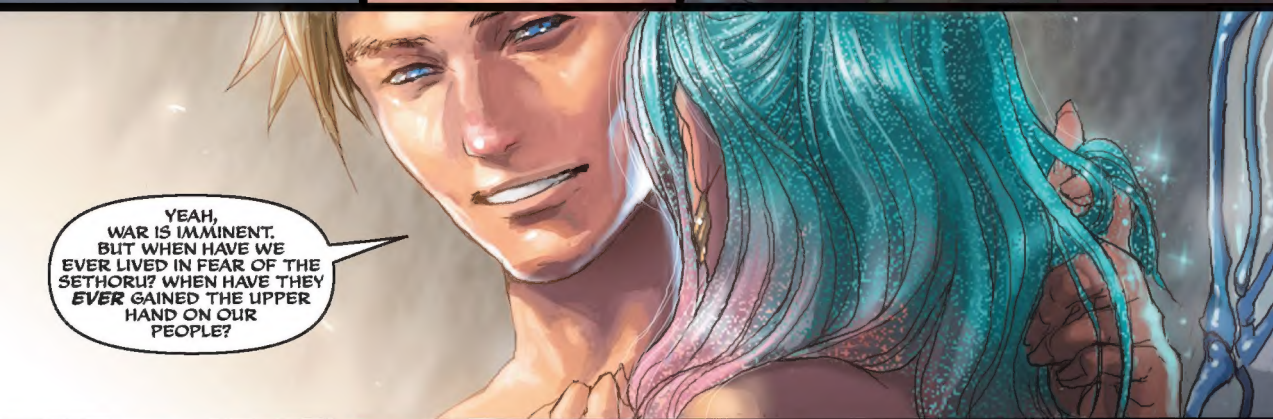
THEN YOU
DO REALIZE
YOUR JOY WILL
BE *SHORT-
LIVED?*



WE ARE
ON THE BRINK
OF WAR.

SOLDIERS
WILL BE CALLED
TO ARMS. *YOU* WILL
BE SUMMONED. I
KNOW IT.

I CAN
SENSE IT.



YEAH,
WAR IS IMMINENT.
BUT WHEN HAVE WE
EVER LIVED IN FEAR OF THE
SETHORU? WHEN HAVE THEY
EVER GAINED THE UPPER
HAND ON OUR
PEOPLE?



IT'S NOT
ABOUT DEFEAT OR
CONQUER, KELSYN, IT'S
YOU I WORRY ABOUT
LOSING.

WAR BEGINS BUT
RARELY ENDS WITH A
SINGLE VICTORY. WHAT
WILL BECOME OF *US*
AFTER EVERYTHING IS
SAID AND DONE?



WE
WILL GROW
OLD TOGETHER,
THAT'S WHAT.

I WILL FINISH
MY TERM IN THE
HONOR GUARD
AND MARRY YOU
PROPERLY.

DO
YOU **REALLY**
BELIEVE
THAT?

WHAT--
YOU
DON'T?

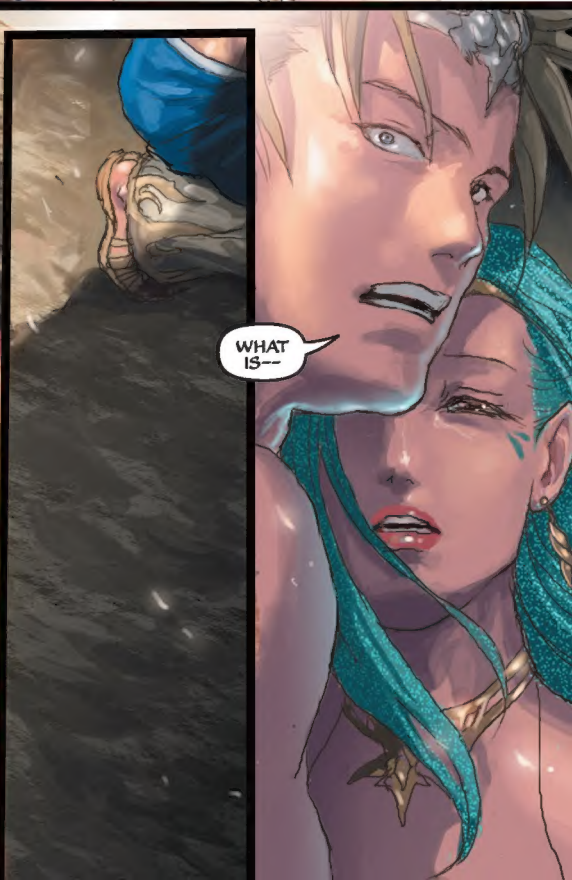


NO, IT'S JUST...
I WORRY, THAT'S
ALL. I'VE NEVER
HAD FEELINGS FOR
SOMEONE AS I
DO FOR--



HEY, HEY,
IT'S ALRIGHT. LET'S
NOT RUIN THE DAY
BICKERING OVER
POLITICS.

I'M HERE
NOW.



WHAT
IS--



WHOA!!!



GRRRRRRR!



MOONCREST!

**DOWN BOY!
NOW!!**



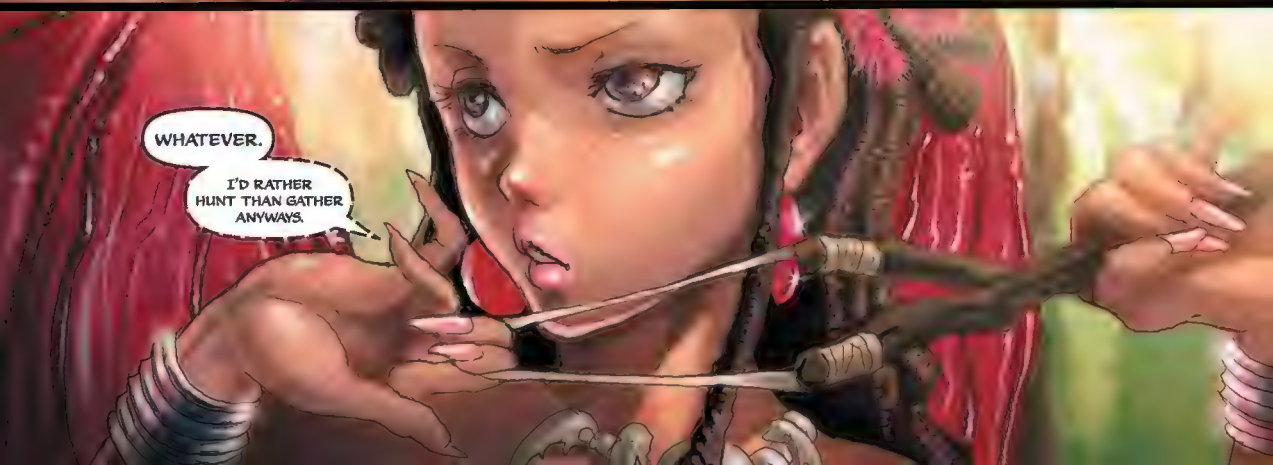
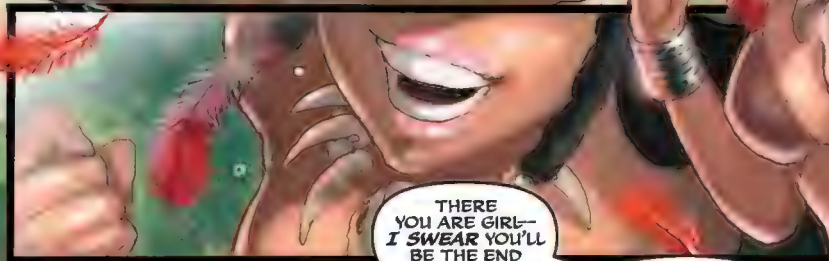


THE SETHORU VILLAGE OF KARTHIA.

REYNA!
GIRL, YOU BETTER SHOW YOURSELF! THERE ARE DAJJA BERRIES TO GATHER!

REYNA!!!







FINALLY,
MOMENTUM
IS ON OUR
SIDE.

THE RAHTUMI
WILL FEEL THE
PAIN AND ANGUISH
WE'VE ENDURED FOR
SO LONG, BUT
TENFOLD.

THEY WILL
FINALLY LIVE IN
THE *SHADOW* OF
OUR MAGIC...



...MY
MAGIC.



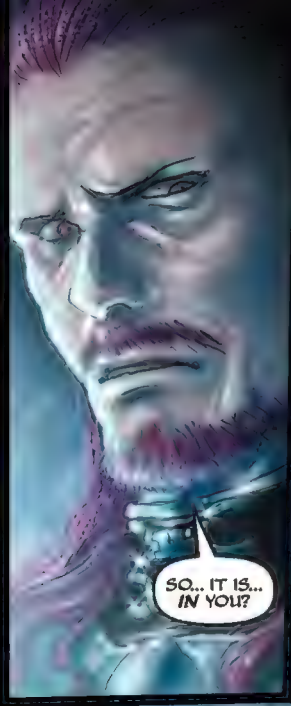
SO
WHERE DO I
COME IN?

YOU ARE
THE CATALYST
FOR IT ALL,
PRAEDUS.

UNDER *YOUR*
DIRECTION, THE
RAHTUMI LEGIONS
WOULD SURELY FOLLOW
YOU INTO THE DEPTHS
OF HELL...



...WHICH IS
EXACTLY WHERE
YOU WILL TAKE
THEM.



SO... IT IS...
IN YOU?



THE SPELL
REQUIRES A HOST
BODY. THE BLOODSTREAM
MAINTAINS THE POTENCY
OF THE MAGIC— BUT ONLY
FOR A SHORT AMOUNT
OF TIME.

BUT
DOESN'T
THAT MEAN IT
WILL—



KILL ME?

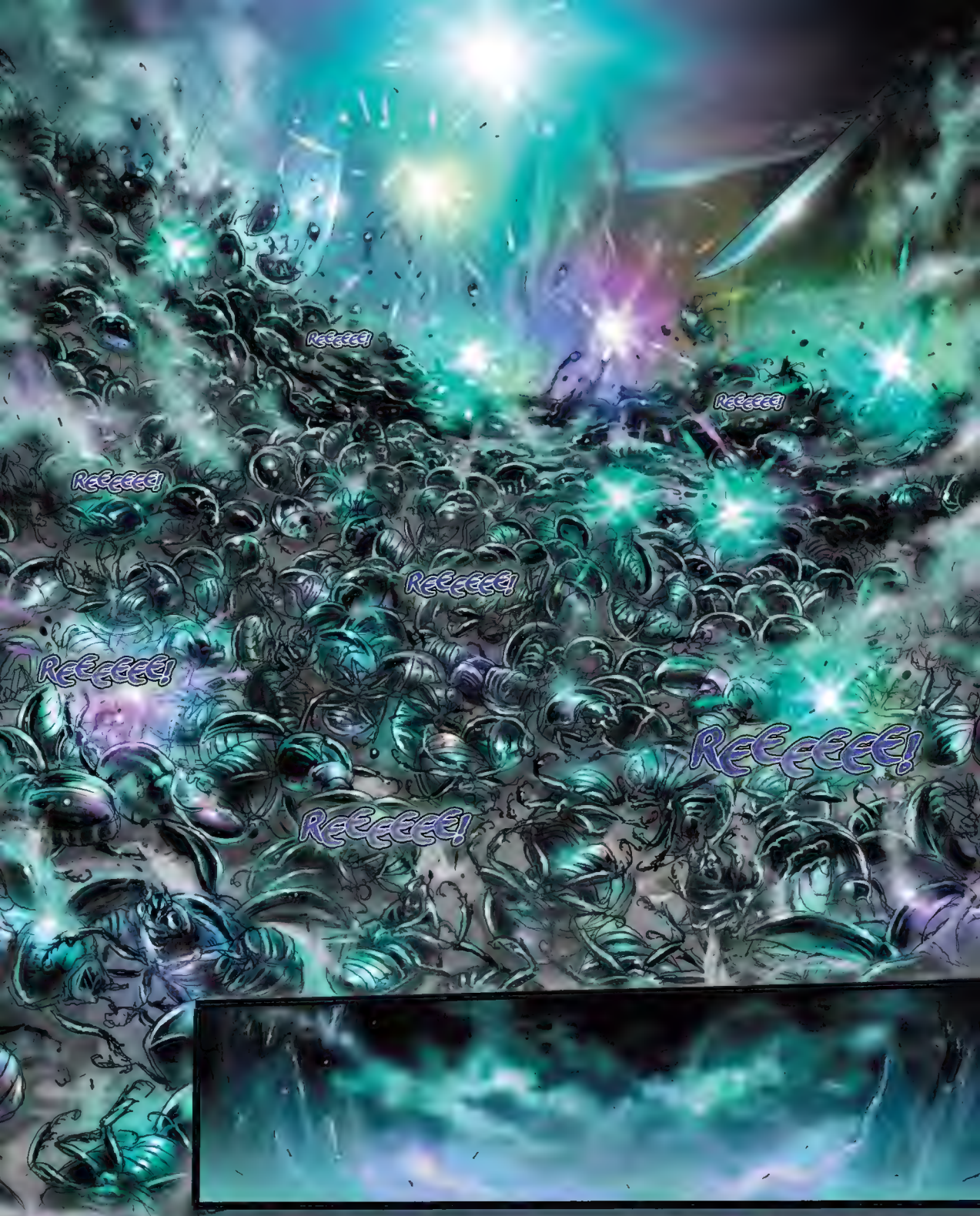
IN *ME*
IT THRIVES...
IN OTHERS, IT
WILL LEAD TO
DEATH.

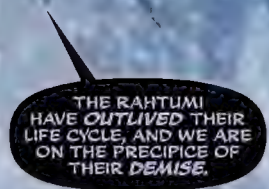
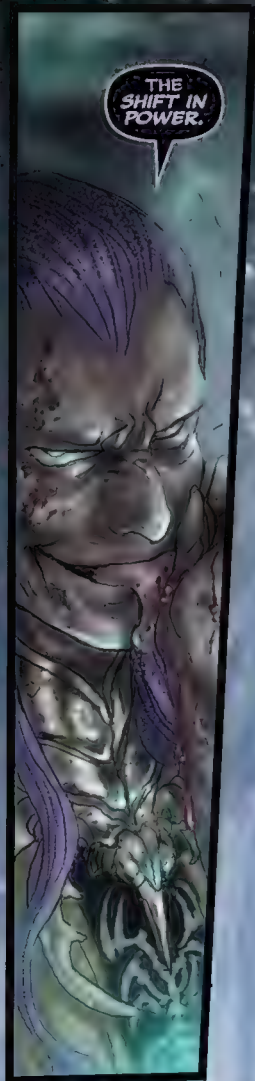
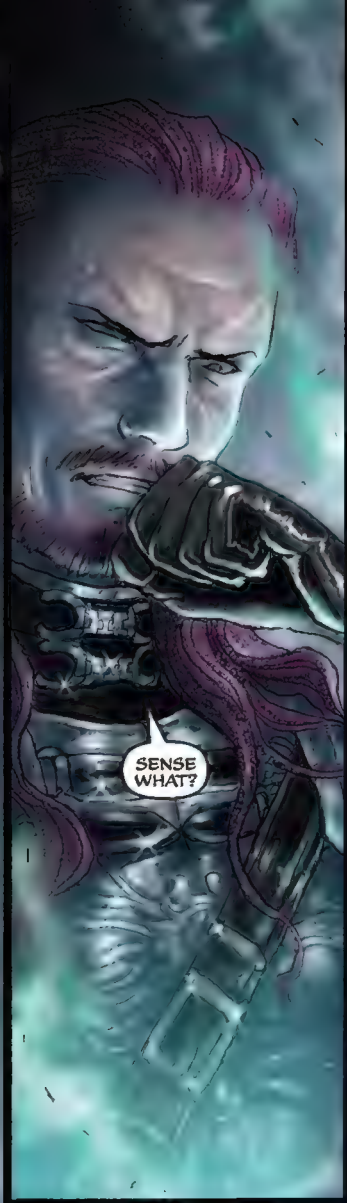
BUT ALL
THAT SHOULD
CONCERN YOU
IS *YOUR*
ROLE...

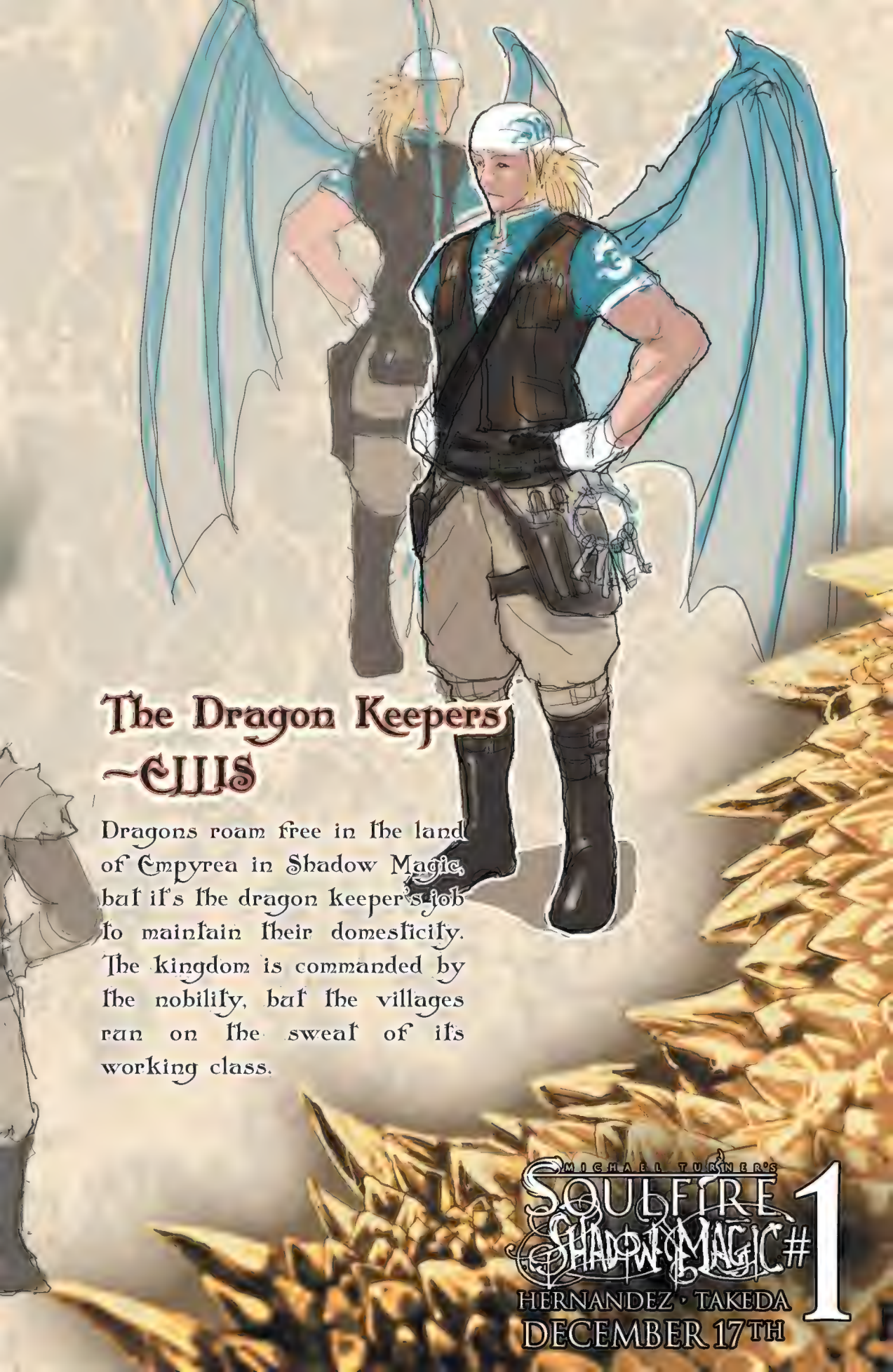


...AND
BRINGING
THE RAHTUM
LEGION TO
US.

MY MAGIC
WILL DO THE
REST.







The Dragon Keepers ~ELLIS

Dragons roam free in the land of Empyrea in *Shadow Magic*, but it's the dragon keeper's job to maintain their domesticity. The kingdom is commanded by the nobility, but the villages run on the sweat of its working class.

MICHAEL TURNER'S
**SOULFIRE
& SHADOW MAGIC #1**
HERNANDEZ • TAKEDA
DECEMBER 17TH



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TAN 08-
P. 10

THE SEEDS OF WAR CHAPTER 1 OF 5

THE
Vince
HERNANDEZ

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SANA
TAKEDA

LETTERS BY

JOSH
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Soundtrack created by
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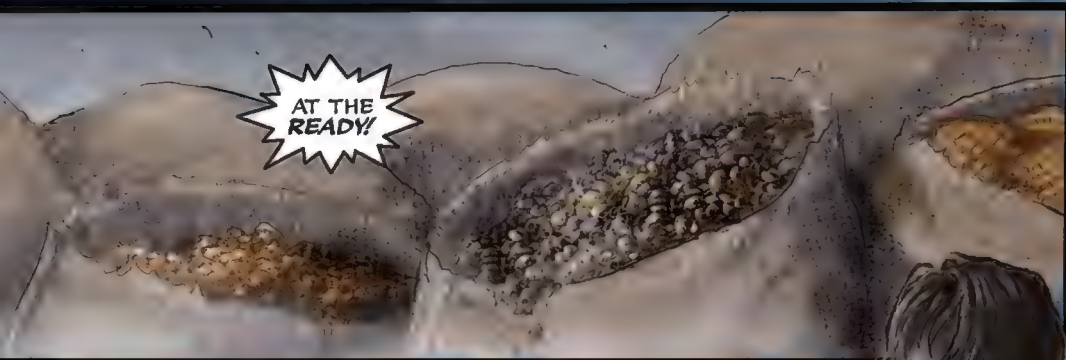
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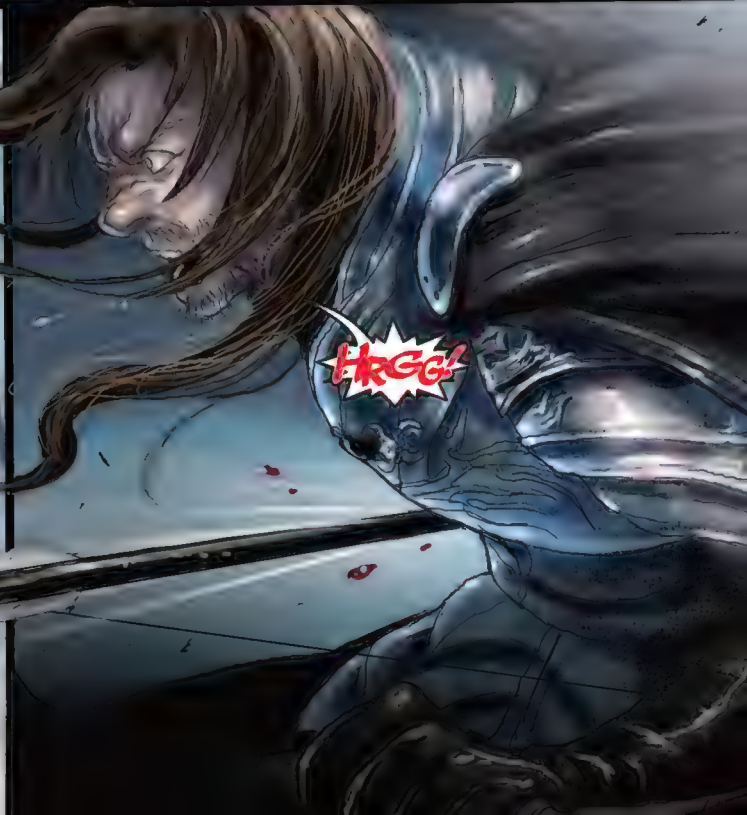
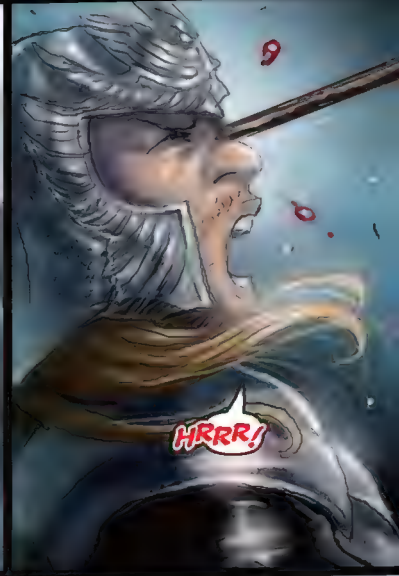
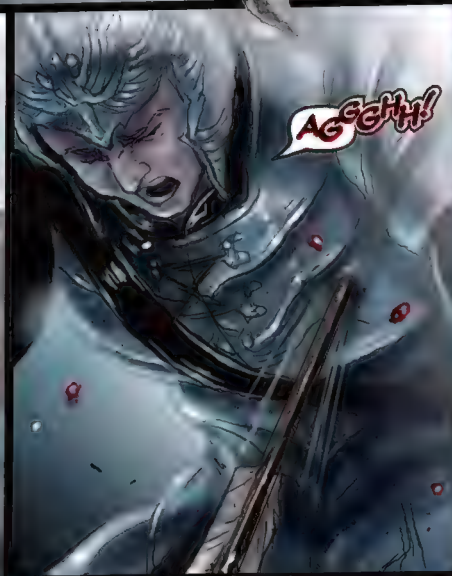
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GRAWR



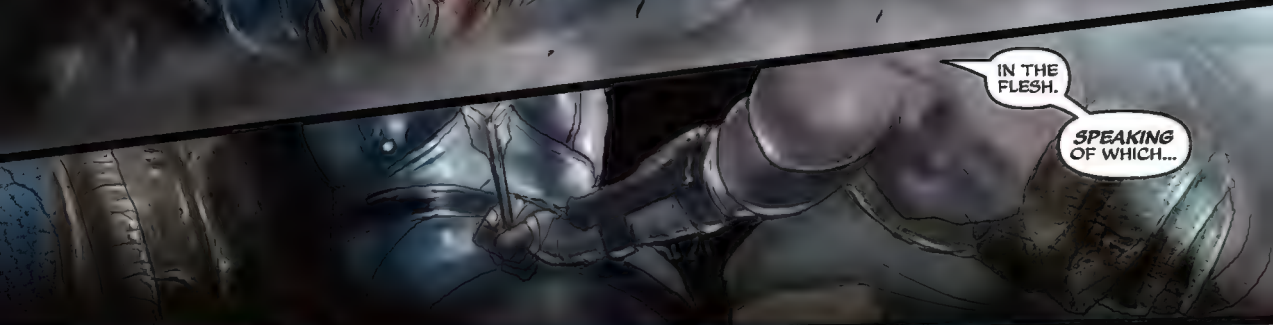


SAVE
YOUR BREATH,
CAPTAIN.

YOU ARE
BLEEDING TO
DEATH.

BETTER NOT TO
WASTE YOUR LAST
WORDS ON YOUR
PREJUDICES.

UNHHH...
HONTIUS.



IN THE
FLESH.

SPEAKING
OF WHICH...



UNHHH...



GRAB AS
MUCH AS YOUR
WINGS CAN HANDLE.
ANYONE WITH A FREE
HAND WILL SUFFER
DEATH BY
ME!

I'LL BE
FOLLOWING
BEHIND
YOU...



JUST
ONE LAST
TARGET.



YES, FIGHT!
I RELISH THE
CHALLENGE.

FOR
SETHORU!

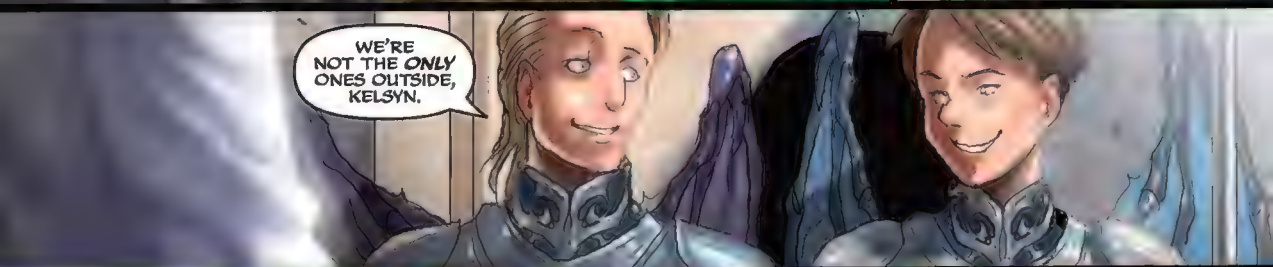
WRRRAA!!!

FOR
WAR.

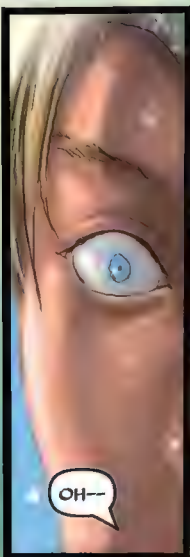




GOOD DAY, GENTLEMEN. IT'S GREAT TO BE OUTSIDE, IS IT NOT?



WE'RE NOT THE ONLY ONES OUTSIDE, KELSYN.



OH--



YOU!



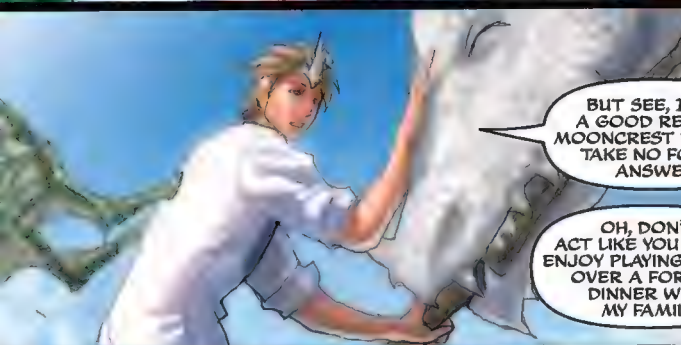
ALMOST GOT
ME THAT TIME
MOONCREST!



THERE
YOU GO, BOY!
FETCH!



WHAT
A SIGHT TO
SEE! BOTH MY
MEN PLAYING
TOGETHER.



SORRY
I'M--

LATE?
YES, YOU
ARE.

BUT SEE, I HAD
A GOOD REASON.
MOONCREST DOESN'T
TAKE NO FOR AN
ANSWER.

OH, DON'T
ACT LIKE YOU DON'T
ENJOY PLAYING GAMES
OVER A FORMAL
DINNER WITH
MY FAMILY.



FORMALITIES
AREN'T REALLY
MY THING MY
LOVE...

BUT *YOU*
ALREADY KNOW
THAT DON'T
YOU--



AH AH AH.
COME! YOU'VE
ALREADY MADE THE
BOTH OF US LATE, I'M
SURE MY MOTHER WILL
CHEW MY EAR OFF
BECAUSE OF IT.



SUCH A
TEASE.

MEANWHILE.

THIS DOES NOT BODE WELL FOR US.

IT'S CERTAINLY THE SETHORU. THEY WILL BE THE ONES TO SUFFER.

THE SETHORU WILL SUFFER, THIS I DON'T DOUBT-- I WILL SEE TO IT MYSELF.

BUT DON'T FOOL YOURSELF. THE SETHORU AS A PEOPLE HAVE **NOTHING** TO LOSE. IT IS A PRECARIOUS POSITION THEY FIND THEMSELVES IN.

STARVATION HAS LED THEM TO FOOLISH ACTION, BUT WAR WITH THE SETHORU WILL **COST LIVES** ON BOTH SIDES.

THESE DEATHS ARE ONLY **THE BEGINNING...**

...MANY INNOCENTS WILL SUFFER IN THIS CONFRONTATION AS WELL.

WHILE I'M GONE, YOU AND LORELEN WILL BE IN CHARGE OF YOUR SISTERS AND BROTHER.

IT'S YOUR DUTY TO WATCH OVER THEM.

NOT MUCH DIFFERENT THAN USUAL.

WHAT WAS THAT?

NOTHING, FATHER.

ELSEWHERE.

AH, I SEE
YOU'VE FINALLY
STOPPED WITH
YOUR INCESSANT
SCREAMING.

SOON,
YOU WILL BE
THANKING
ME.

I'VE MADE
YOU THE SYMBOL
OF SETHORU FREEDOM.
YOU WILL BE REMEMBERED
THROUGHOUT HISTORY AS
THE CATALYST FOR OUR
REVOLUTION.

OUR
HOST.

ALLOW
ME.

NOW, IT
IS TIME...

YOU WILL LEAD
YOUR LEGION TO
THE WALLS OF
EMPYREA...

...AND TO OUR
RESURRECTION.

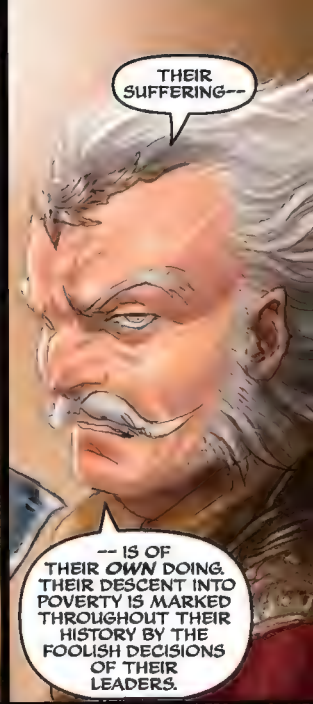


THEY'RE SAVAGES.

PLAIN AND SIMPLE. THE SETHORU LACK A BASIC EDUCATION. THEY TRULY ARE LESSER BEINGS.

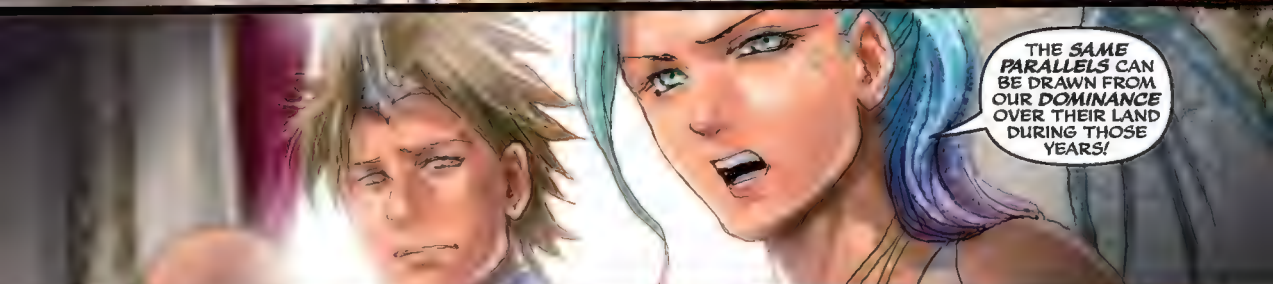
A BIT HARSH, IS IT *NOT* LORD ENDREW? SURELY THEY ARE REACTING WITH THEIR EMPTY BELLIES.

ANY PERSON SUFFERING FROM FAMINE WOULD REACT THE SAME I SUPPOSE.

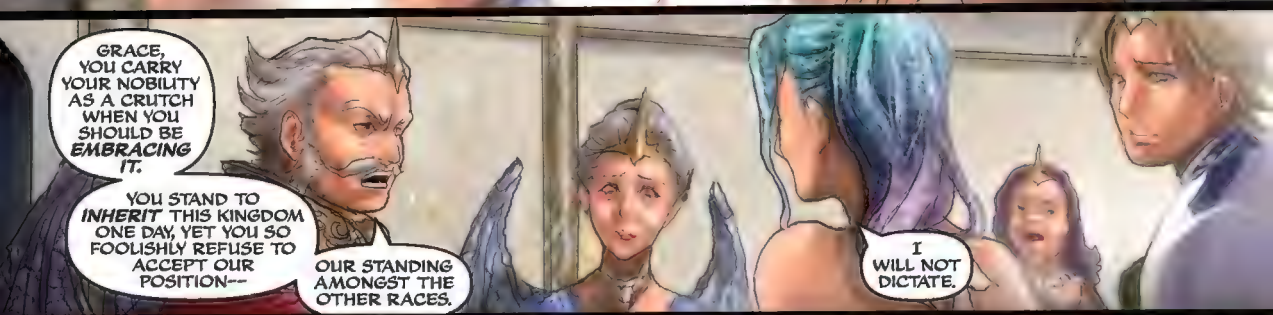


THEIR SUFFERING--

-- IS OF THEIR *OWN* DOING. THEIR DESCENT INTO POVERTY IS MARKED THROUGHOUT THEIR HISTORY BY THE FOOLISH DECISIONS OF THEIR LEADERS.



THE SAME PARALLELS CAN BE DRAWN FROM OUR *DOMINANCE* OVER THEIR LAND DURING THOSE YEARS!



GRACE, YOU CARRY YOUR NOBILITY AS A CRUTCH WHEN YOU SHOULD BE EMBRACING IT.

YOU STAND TO *INHERIT* THIS KINGDOM ONE DAY, YET YOU SO FOOLISHLY REFUSE TO ACCEPT OUR POSITION--

OUR STANDING AMONGST THE OTHER RACES.

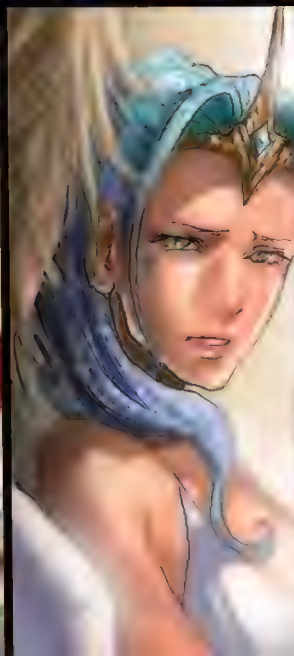
I WILL NOT DICTATE.



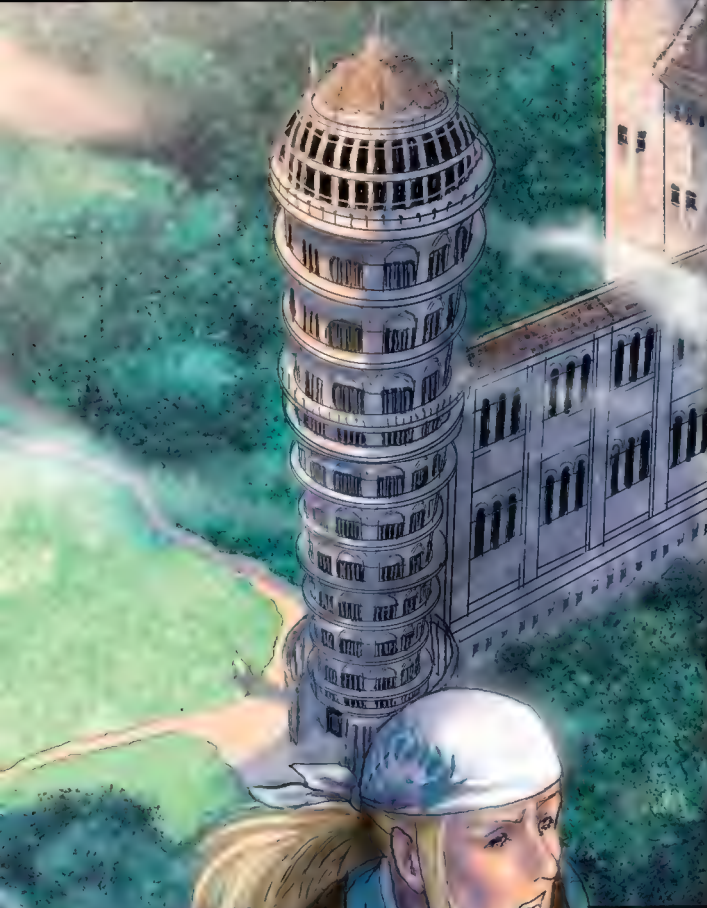
AND I DO NOT DICTATE. YET THANK YOU FOR YOUR THINLY-VEILED ACCUSATION.

BESIDES, LIKE IT OR NOT, YOU *WILL COME* TO INHERIT THE SETHORU TITLES SOONER THAN YOU THINK...

WE HAVE DECLARED WAR.



MY ACCUSATION WASN'T VEILED. YOU MAY ATTEMPT TO HIDE YOUR TRUE NATURE, BUT WE ALL KNOW *WHAT YOU ARE!*



MOONCREST!

DO YOU
RECKON ME
CREATURE???



MOONEY, YOU KEEP
CHARRING THESE WALLS
AND I'M GONNA PUT YOU IN
THE COMMON STABLES WITH
THE OTHER SCALE-HEADS--
I SWEAR TO IT!



~HMPH~

SLEEPING AS
USUAL. ONE OF
THESE DAYS...



HAVE ROOM FOR TWO?

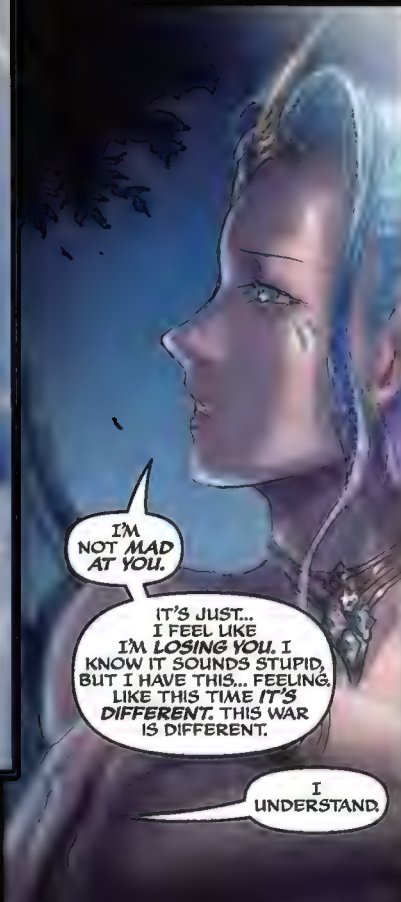
I'M SORRY I STORMED OFF.

HEY I LOVE ENTERTAINING THE FUTURE IN-LAWS. I AWED THEM WITH MY VAST WISDOM AND MY UNRELENTING CHARM!

DON'T FLATTER YOURSELF-- YOU'RE NOT THAT CHARMING.



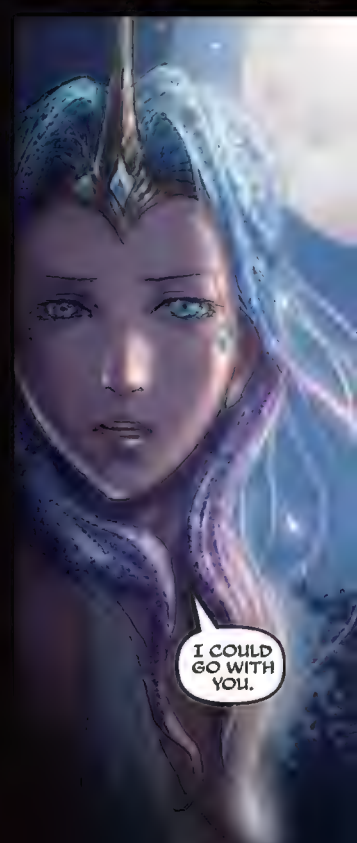
I'M TRYING OVER HERE, GRACE. CUT ME SOME SLACK.



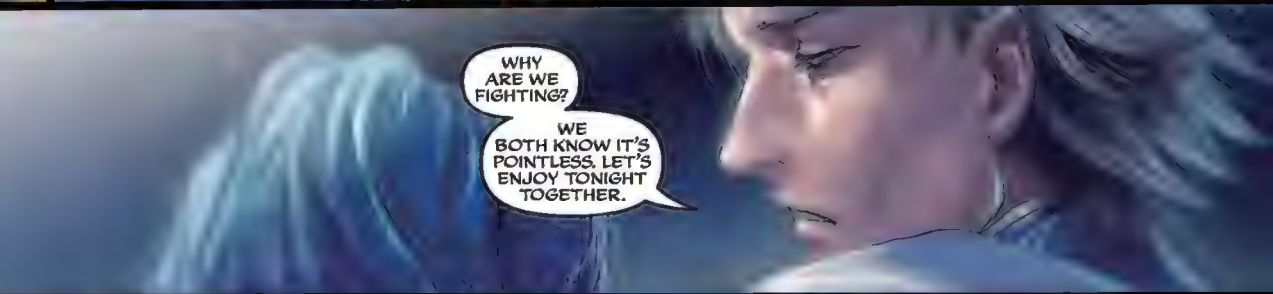
I'M NOT MAD AT YOU.

IT'S JUST... I FEEL LIKE I'M LOSING YOU. I KNOW IT SOUNDS STUPID, BUT I HAVE THIS... FEELING, LIKE THIS TIME IT'S DIFFERENT. THIS WAR IS DIFFERENT.

I UNDERSTAND.



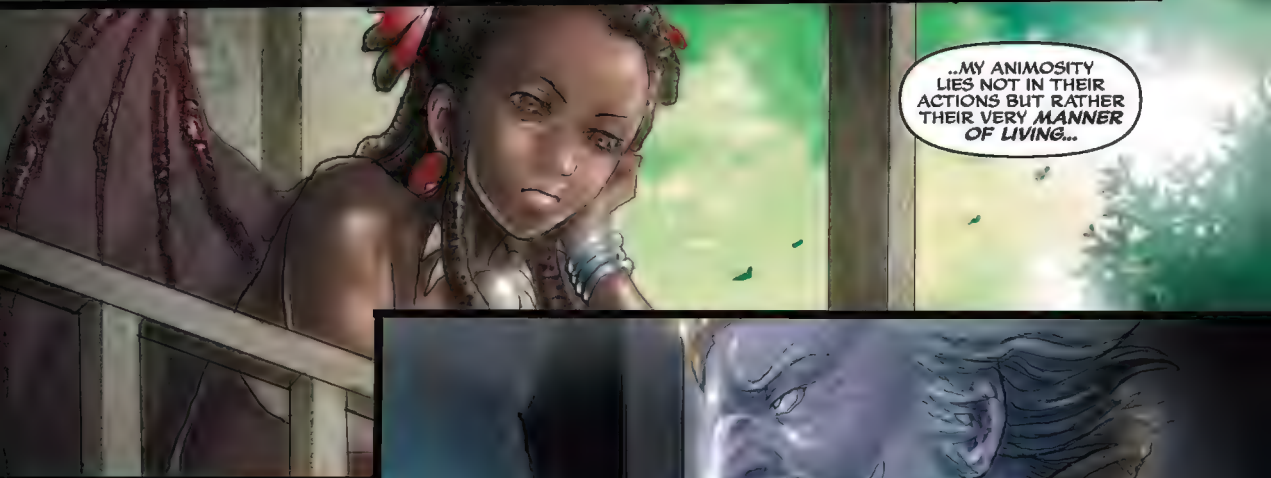
I COULD GO WITH YOU.



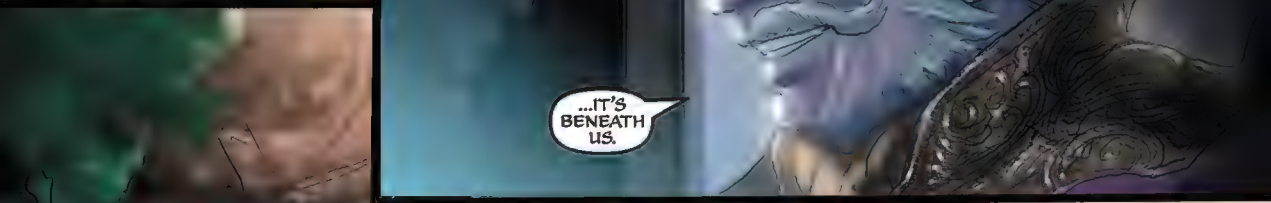


THIS IS
LONG OVERDUE
FOR THE
SETHORU.

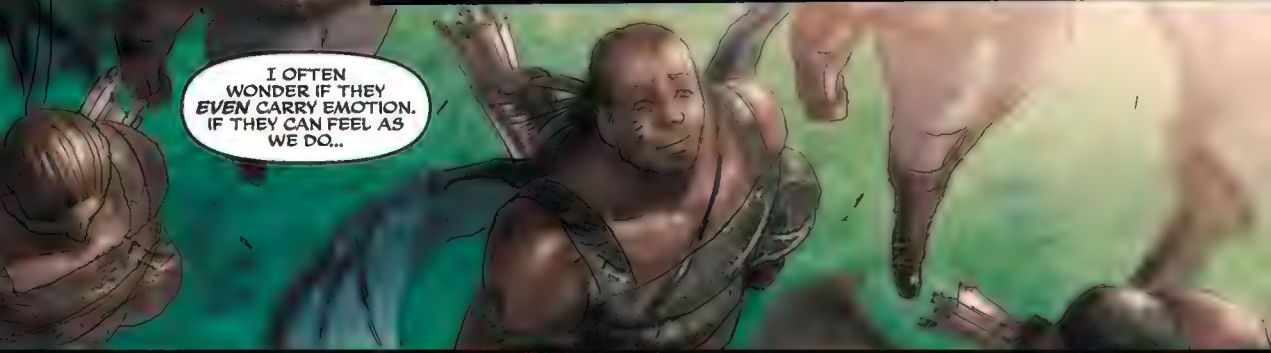
THE
ATTACK ON OUR
GRAIN TRANSPORT
ONLY SCRATCHES THE
SURFACE OF THEIR
INDISCRETION...



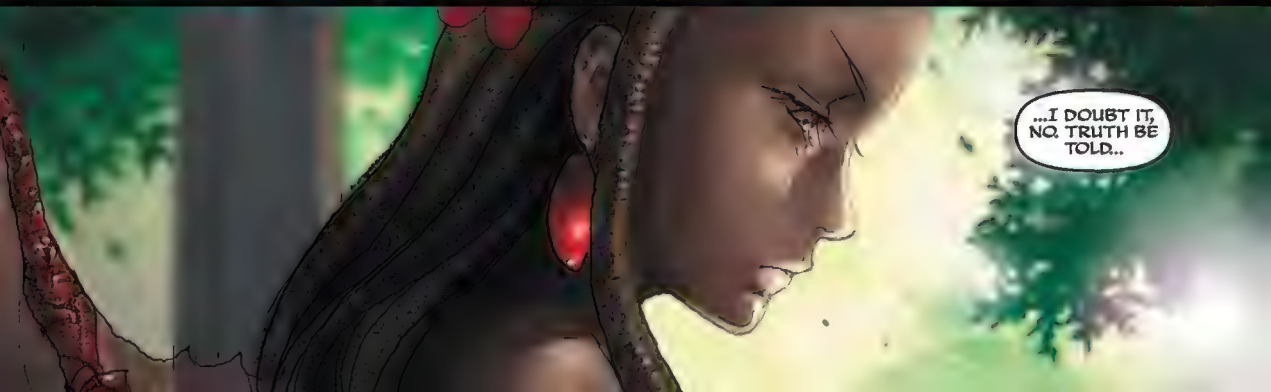
...MY ANIMOSITY
LIES NOT IN THEIR
ACTIONS BUT RATHER
THEIR VERY **MANNER**
OF LIVING...



...IT'S
BENEATH
US.



I OFTEN
WONDER IF THEY
EVEN CARRY EMOTION.
IF THEY CAN FEEL AS
WE DO...



...I DOUBT IT,
NO. TRUTH BE
TOLD...



...THEIR RACE
WAS DUE FOR
EXTINCTION
YEARS AGO.



KNOWING YOU
ALL THESE YEARS,
I'M **CERTAIN** IT'S
FOOLISH TO TRY TO
PERSUADE YOU TO
STAY.

YOU KNOW
ME WELL, ELUS,
I APPRECIATE THE
ATTEMPT. AND I TRUST
YOU WILL KEEP MY
DEPARTURE
SECRET.

BUT THEN YOU
AND MOONCREST
WILL PROBABLY BE
THE **ONLY ONES** TO
NOTICE I'M GONE
ANYWAY.

ALL DUE RESPECT,
GRACE, I **HIGHLY** DOUBT
THAT. YOUR SETTING OFF
AFTER THE BATTLE WILL
SURELY SEND RIPPLES
ACROSS EMPYREA.



IF
SOMETHING
WERE TO
HAPPEN TO
YOU—

EASE
YOUR MIND MY
FRIEND. I'M MORE
RESOURCEFUL
THAN YOU'D
IMAGINE.

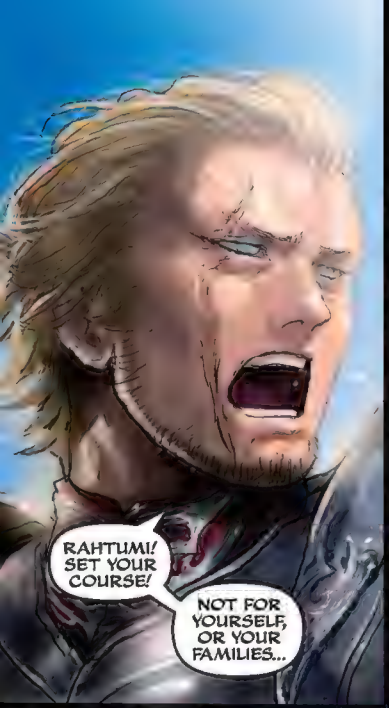


AND YOU!

DON'T
EVEN THINK OF
TRACKING ME. THIS
TIME, IT'S **NOT** A
GAME, OKAY?



GOODBYE,
MY LOVE.

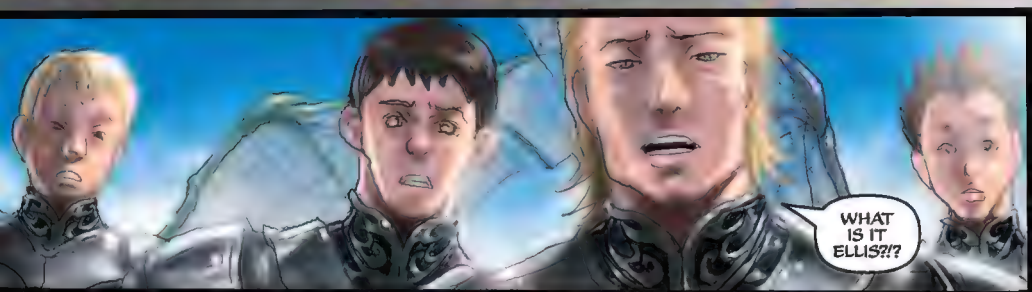


RAHTUMI!
SET YOUR
COURSE!

NOT FOR
YOURSELF,
OR YOUR
FAMILIES...



...BUT
FOR YOUR
KINGDOM!!!





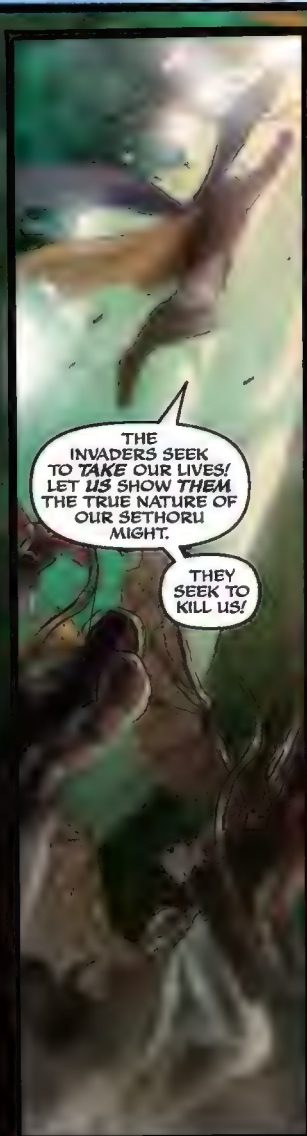
MY FATHER WILL
SURELY DIE.

THEY ALL WILL.



I'M NEITHER WISE NOR
FOOLISH, BUT I CAN SEE
THIS REALITY CLEARLY.

WE CANNOT
DEFEAT THEM.



THE
INVADERS SEEK
TO TAKE OUR LIVES!
LET US SHOW THEM
THE TRUE NATURE OF
OUR SETHORU
MIGHT.

THEY
SEEK TO
KILL US!



WE WILL
SHOW THEM WHAT
LIES BENEATH WHEN
OUR BLOOD IS
SHED!



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#2

OF 5
COVER A

MICHAEL TURNER'S SOULFIRE & SHADOW MAGIC





VOL. 1

#2

OF 5
COVER B

MICHAEL TURNER'S
SOUTHERN
SHADOW & MAGIC



WIND
STUDIO

THE WINDS OF LOSS

CHAPTER 2 OF 5

STORY BY
VINCE
HERNANDEZ

ILLUSTRATIONS BY
SANA
TAKEDA

LETTERS BY
JOSH
REED

SPECIAL THANKS
AKHTIDE YANAGI

Soulfire created by
MICHAEL TURNER

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MICHAEL TURNER'S SOULFIRE: SHADOW MAGIC™ Vol. 1 Issue 2

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ONE
SHOT!

IMPRESSED,
LORELEN?



DID YOU
HAVE TO WAIT
UNTIL THE LAST
MINUTE, REYNA?? I
ALMOST SOILED
MYSELF-- NEXT
TIME YOU'RE
THE BAIT!

PUH-LEESE.



YOU KNOW
I'M A BETTER SHOT.
YOU REALLY THINK I'D
PUT MY LIFE IN YOUR
SHAKY HANDS,
SIS?



BESIDES,
NOW DINNER IS
SERVED.



KRITON, I'M SURPRISED.

YOUR
GUARD IS NOT
WHAT IT USED
TO BE.

MY SENSES
ARE SHARP AS
EVER, AZAR.

BUT
DETECTING A
SORCERER? EVEN *YOU*
CAN APPRECIATE THE
DISPARITY IN THAT
CONTEST.

A SORCERER?

I ONCE
WISHED THAT
STATEMENT TRUE MYSELF,
UNTIL I DISCOVERED A
SORCERER'S POWER IS AS
THEIR MAGIC-- VANE IN
ITS EXISTENCE.

FOR THE
TRUE MEASURE
OF ONE'S POWER IS
THE WILL TO USE IT
WHEN CALLED
UPON.



WHAT
ABOUT YOU,
KRITON?

WILL YOU
BE ABLE TO SEIZE
UPON YOUR POWER
AND DELIVER WHEN
YOUR TIME DRAWS
NEAR?

QUESTION
MY SENSES, BUT
NOT MY ARMY,
AZAR.

SETHORU
KNOW NOTHING
BUT THE WILL TO
SURVIVE-- I WILL
TEACH THEM HOW
TO CONQUER.

AND
THEN I LEAVE
YOU TO YOUR
BIDDING.



HEY!



HEY! YOU
THERE!



STOP!
YOU'RE NOT A
SOLDIER!



STRANGER,
YOU'VE BEEN
ORDERED TO
STOP.



YOU'RE
TRESPASSING, THESE
HILTOPS HAVE BEEN SEIZED
BY ORDER OF THE RAHTUMI
HONOR GUARD. REVEAL
YOURSELF IMMEDIATELY
OR FACE DEATH!

I'M A
RAHTUMI AS WELL,
THERE'S NO NEED FOR
YOUR DEFENSIVE
POSITION.



I'VE COME
TO OFFER MY
SERVICES IN
BATTLE...



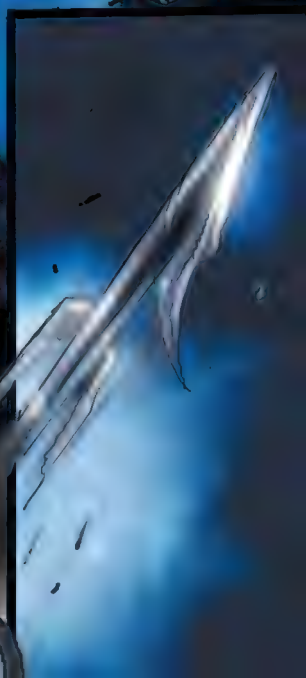
...AS
WELL AS MY
MAGIC.

GRACE.



IN
LINE SOLDIERS,
THE FIRST LADY OF
EMPYREA IS IN YOUR
PRESENCE!

GRACE?





REEEE!!

HRRGH!

YARCH!

PULL
YOUR LINES
NOW!

NOT MUCH
OF A CATCH IN SIZE,
BUT HIS SCALES WILL
SELL NICELY ON THE
MARKET.

SECURE
IT ON THE CANVAS!
LET'S MOVE!!!

AARRR



THEY
WERE MORE...
WELCOMING...
THAN I IMAGINED.
I LIKE YOUR
REGIMENT.



WHAT
ARE YOU DOING
HERE?

BUT THAT *IS*
THE REACTION
I EXPECTED
FROM YOU.

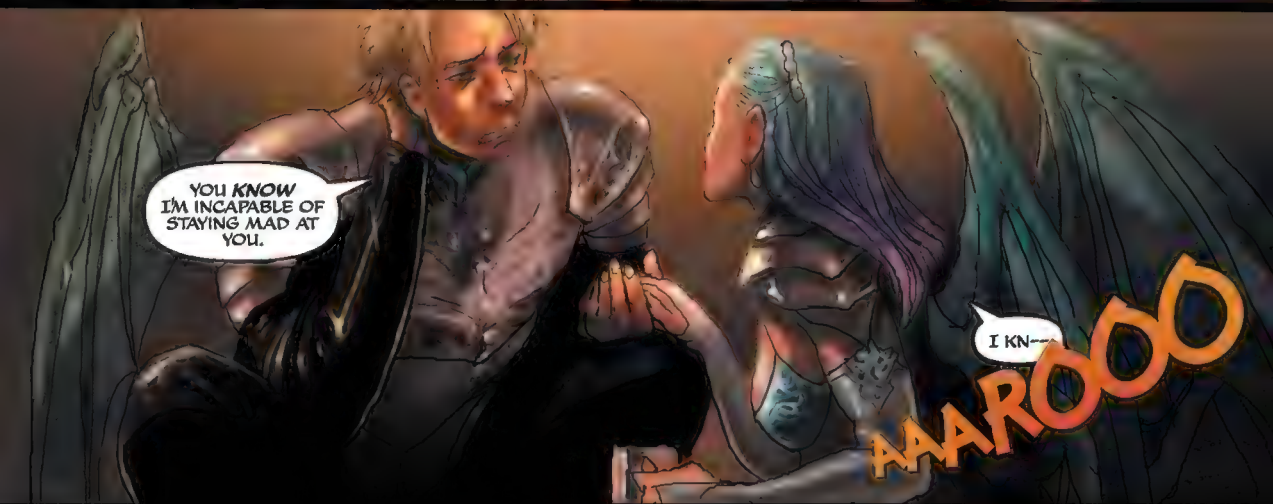
YOU CAN'T
BE HERE GRACE,
THIS IS SETHORU
TERRITORY WE'RE IN
NOW-- IT'S TOO
DANGEROUS.



DON'T
UNDERESTIMATE
MY POWER, KELSYN.
I CAN HELP-- AND
THIS WAY WE CAN
BE TOGETHER.



~SIGH~



YOU KNOW
I'M INCAPABLE OF
STAYING MAD AT
YOU.

I KN--

AAAROOO

NO...

STRIKE
QUICK AND
FIERCE!

SHOW THESE
RAHTUM! THE PRICE
FOR INVADING OUR
LAND IS *DEATH!*





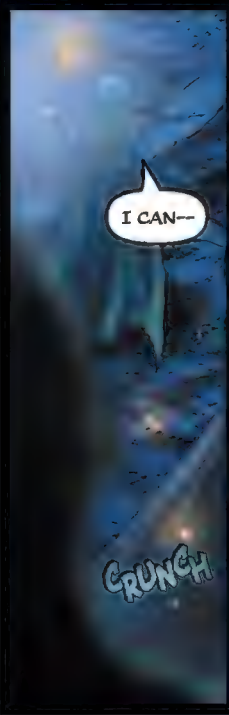
AGGGH!

UGH!

THEY'RE
SETHORU ROYAL
GUARDS! GRACE STAY
IN THE TENT! IT'S THE
SAFEST PLACE
TO BE!



HEY!
DON'T TALK
TO ME LIKE
THAT!



I CAN--

CRUNCH

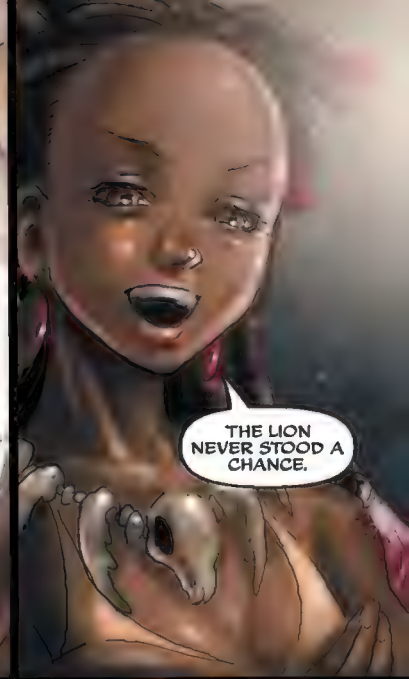


FIGHT...?



AND
THE MONSTER
SPRANG FORWARD
FOR LORELEN!

BUT
LUCKILY FOR SIS,
I WAS THERE WITH
MY DRAGON'S
EYE-SIGHT!



THE LION
NEVER STOOD A
CHANCE.

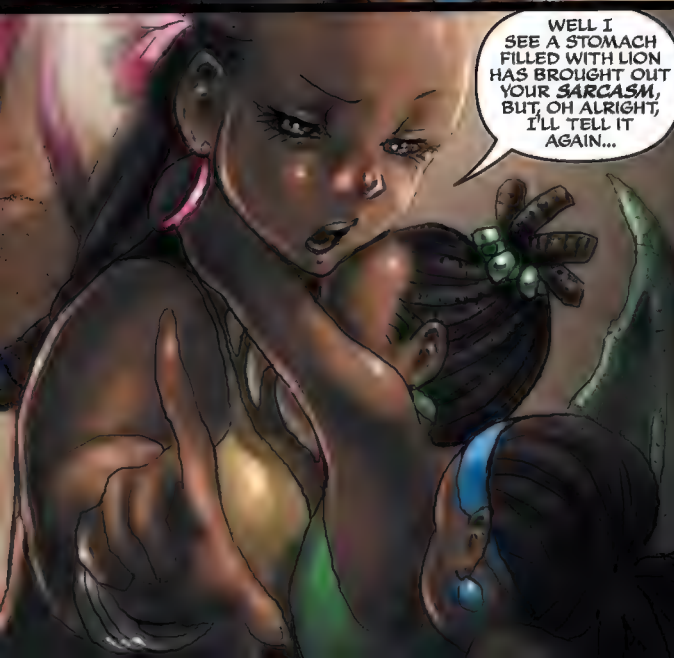


AGAIN!
AGAIN REYNA,
TELL IT
AGAIN!!!



YES,
SIS...

DO TELL
US AGAIN
ABOUT YOUR
HEROISM.



WELL I
SEE A STOMACH
FILLED WITH LION
HAS BROUGHT OUT
YOUR **SARCASM**,
BUT, OH ALRIGHT,
I'LL TELL IT
AGAIN...



YOU SEE, IN
ORDER TO TAKE
DOWN A BEAST-- **ANY**
BEAST, OF ANY **SIZE**,
YOU DON'T NEED A
BOW AND ARROW OR
SWORD-- **NO...**



...YOUR BEST
WEAPON IS THE
POWER WITHIN
YOU...

...AND
WHETHER OR
NOT YOU *CHOOSE*
TO WIELD IT.

WELL
I'LL BE.

A WOMAN
OF *NOBILITY* IN THE
FRONTLINES OF BATTLE.
AND A *MAGIC* ONE
AT THAT!

FOR
THIS OCCASION,
I'LL USE MY BARE
HANDS!



UNNNH!

GRACE!!!

AHHH!

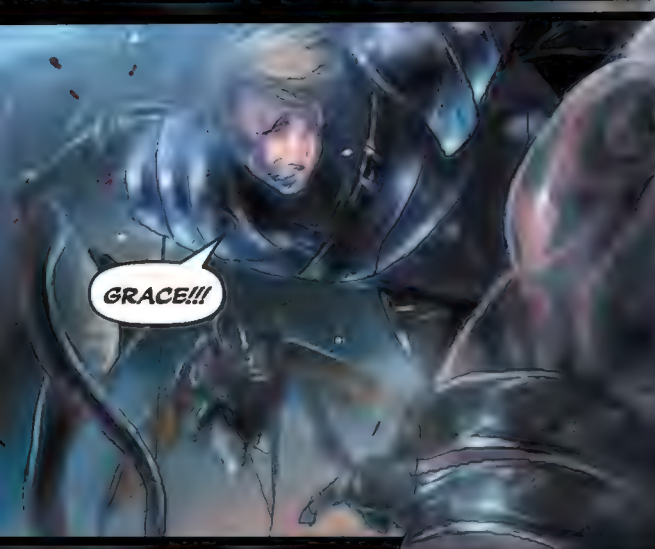
DOWN,
GIRL!

URGGH!

AH AH!
NO MAGIC THIS
TIME!



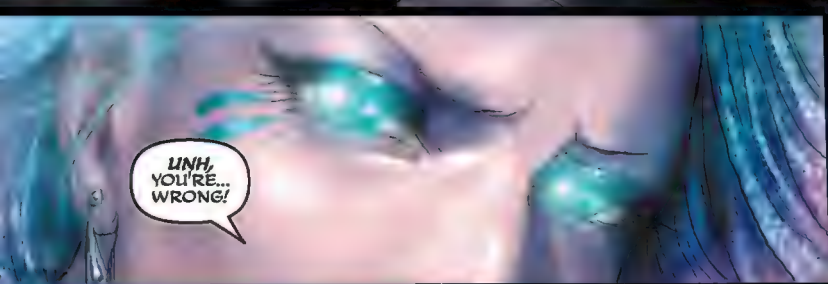
OUT OF
MY WAY!



GRACE!!!



NOT
SO TOUGH
WITHOUT YOUR
MAGIC.

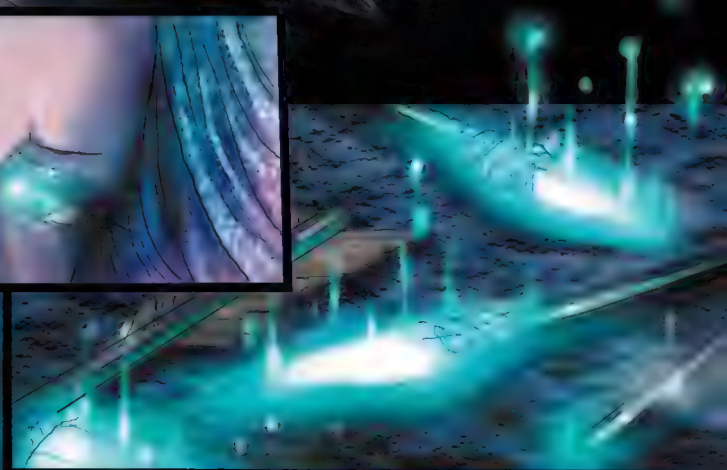


UNH,
YOU'RE...
WRONG!



AM I?

JUST AN
AVERAGE
GIRL IS
WHAT I
SEE.



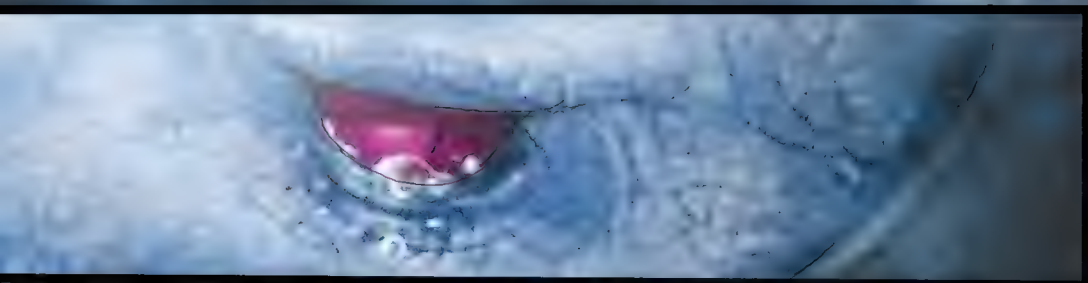
NO REASON
TO STRUGGLE,
I'LL MAKE THIS
QUI--

I...
... I
KILLED
HIM.

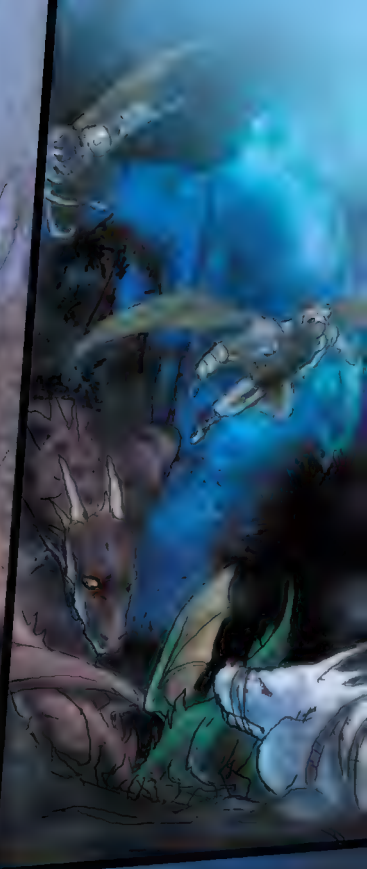
... I
KILLED A
MAN.





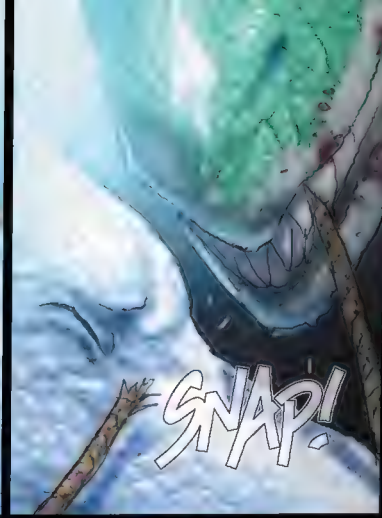




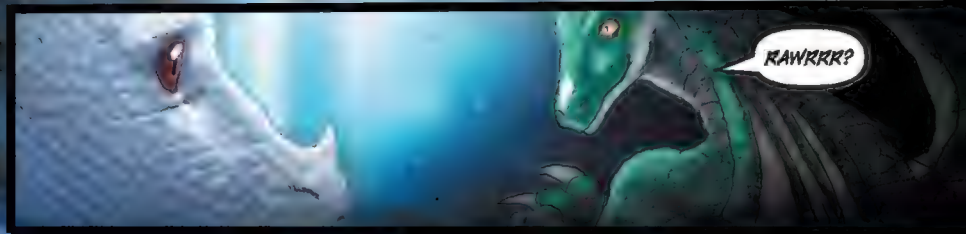
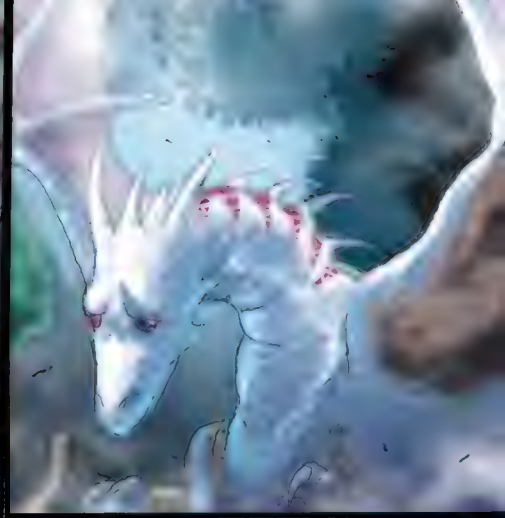




Rlllp



SNAP!



RAWRRR?



TO BE
CONTINUED
IN

MICHAEL C. LUTHER'S
SQUELFIRE #3
SHADOW MAGIC



VOL. 1

#3

OF 5
COVER A

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THE CURSE OF POWER

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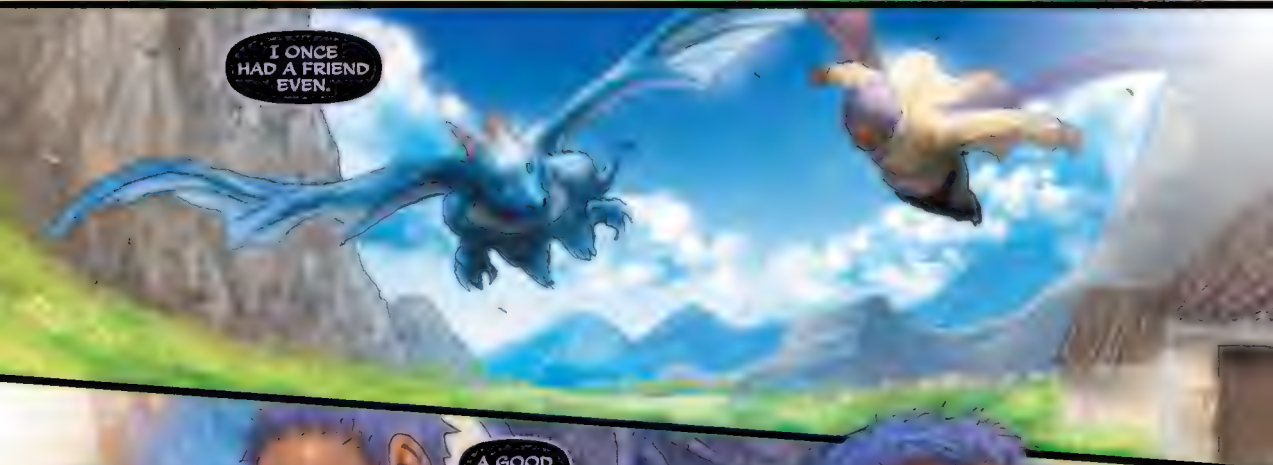
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DOES IT
EVER GET
TO YOU? THE
ISOLATION UP
HERE?

THAT'S A
VALID CURIOSITY,
KRITON.

I WOULD POSE THE
SAME QUESTION IF I WERE
IN YOUR POSITION. MY NATURE
AND SURROUNDINGS SUGGEST A
WRETCHED LIFE OF SOLITARY...
BUT YOU'D BE SURPRISED TO
KNOW I'VE NOT ALWAYS
LIVED THIS WAY.



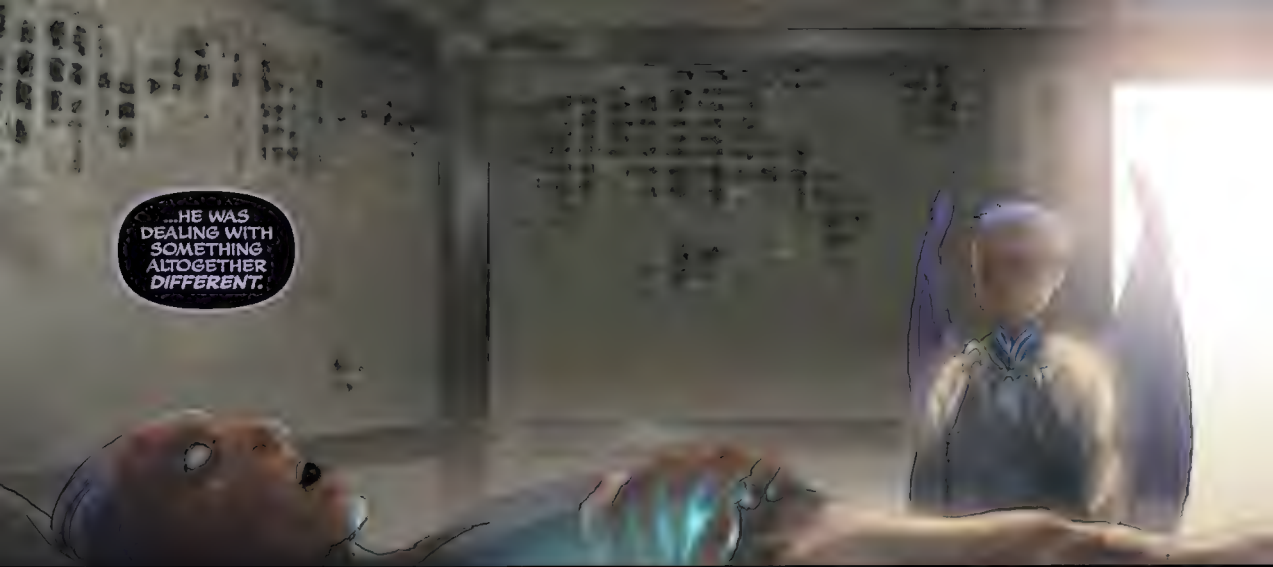
I ONCE
HAD A FRIEND
EVEN.



A GOOD
FRIEND.

PERHAPS
THE ONLY
FRIEND I'VE
EVER HAD.

I WAS OFTEN
ALONE DURING THOSE
CYCLES. I LEARNED TO TEND
TO MY NEEDS WITHOUT
PARENTAL GUIDANCE. BESIDES,
MY MOTHER DIED WHILE
GIVING BIRTH TO ME, AND
MY FATHER...



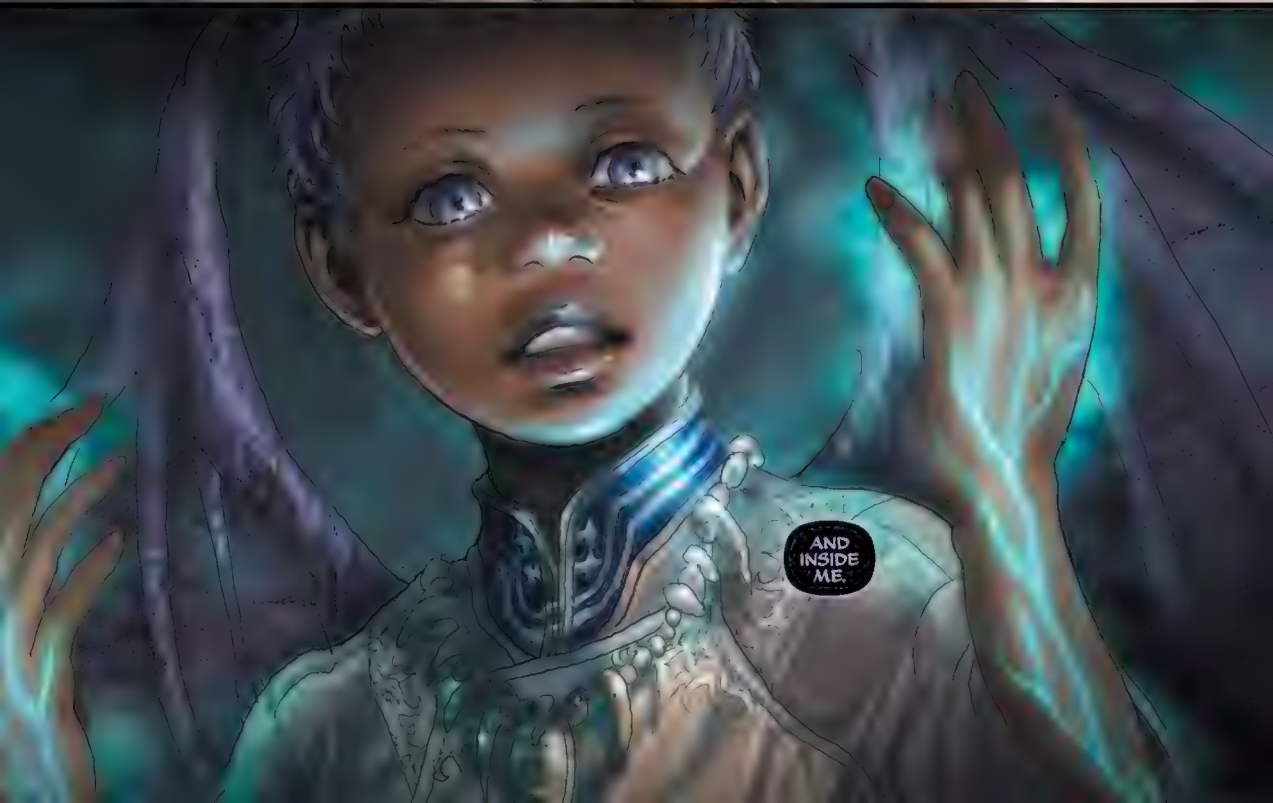
...HE WAS
DEALING WITH
SOMETHING
ALTOGETHER
DIFFERENT.



HE COULD
NOT BE THE FATHER
I NEEDED, YET LIVING
WITH AND WITNESSING HIS
CONDITION FIRSTHAND, I
DIDN'T FAULT HIM
FOR THIS.

AT FIRST,
THIS FORM OF MAGIC
FRIGHTENED
ME.

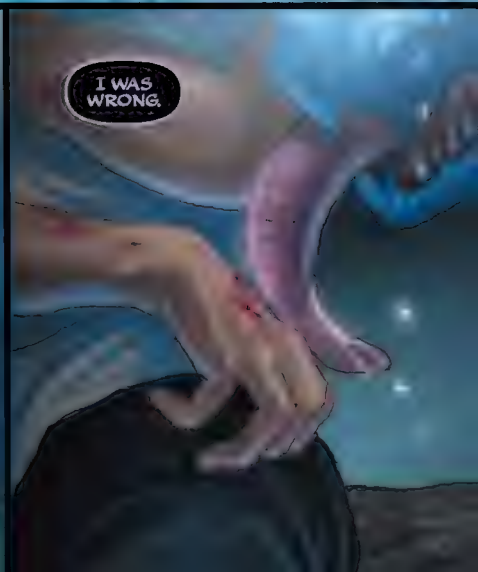
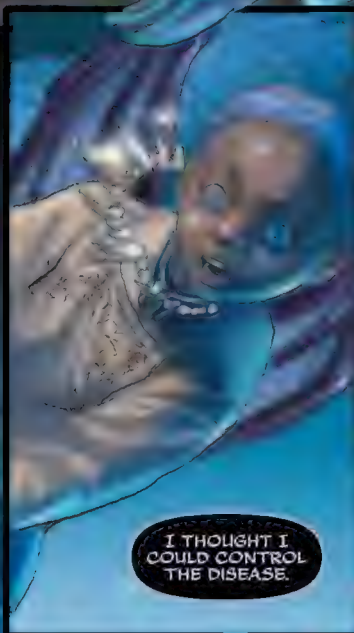
AS A BOY,
I COULDN'T
COMPREHEND THE
TRUE NATURE OF IT.
ALL I KNEW IS WHAT
I SAW IN FRONT
OF ME.



AND
INSIDE
ME.



BUT, YOUNG
AND FOOLISH, I DIDN'T
THINK MY TOTALITY COULD
EFFECT THOSE BEYOND
MY CURSED FAMILY.





MY MAGIC
SPREAD OVER THE
DRAGONS AS A DARK
CLOUD SHADOWS
OVER LAND.

MY ONLY
FRIEND...
DEAD.

THE HORRORS OF
IT'S EFFECT SHOOK OUR
VILLAGE. BUT THE SPEED BY
WHICH IT OCCURRED IS WHAT
TRULY SENT THEM INTO A
STATE OF FEAR.



I BELIEVE IT
WAS THAT FEAR
KEPT THEM FROM
TOSSEING ME INTO
THE FIRE, AS
WELL.

FEAR OF WHAT
RAN THROUGH MY
VEINS... AND WHAT
IT COULD DO
TO THEM.



I DECIDED THEN TO
CONCEAL MYSELF HERE AT
THE TOP OF THE MOUNTAIN...
FOR THE SAKE OF THE
VILLAGE.

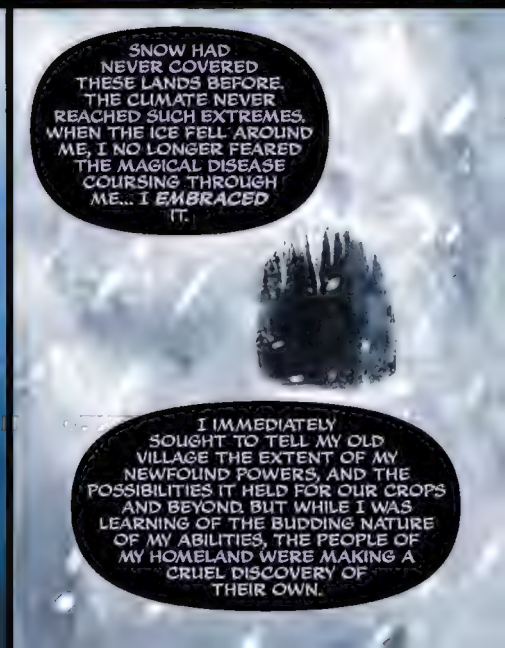


HOWEVER...

...MAYBE BECAUSE
MY BLOOD RAN COLD
FROM THE HIGH ALTITUDE...
OR MORE LIKELY DUE TO MY
DEPRESSED STATE OF MIND... I
CAN NEVER BE CERTAIN THE
REASON, BUT SOMETHING
PHENOMENAL HAPPENED
AROUND ME WHILE I SAT
IN DESPAIR.



IT
SNOWED.



SNOW HAD
NEVER COVERED
THESE LANDS BEFORE.
THE CLIMATE NEVER
REACHED SUCH EXTREMES.
WHEN THE ICE FELL AROUND
ME, I NO LONGER FEARED
THE MAGICAL DISEASE
COURSING THROUGH
ME... I EMBRACED
IT.

I IMMEDIATELY
SOUGHT TO TELL MY OLD
VILLAGE THE EXTENT OF MY
NEWFOUND POWERS, AND THE
POSSIBILITIES IT HELD FOR OUR CROPS
AND BEYOND. BUT WHILE I WAS
LEARNING OF THE BUDDING NATURE
OF MY ABILITIES, THE PEOPLE OF
MY HOMETOWN WERE MAKING A
CRUEL DISCOVERY OF
THEIR OWN.

A winged figure, possibly an angel or a warrior, floats in the center of the frame. The figure has large, dark, feathered wings and is wearing a light-colored tunic and dark pants. The figure's face is obscured by a dark mask or shadow. The figure is positioned above a battlefield where several soldiers in armor lie motionless on the ground. The background is a dramatic, cloudy sky with a mix of blue and white tones. The overall mood is somber and reflective.

THE
POWER OF THE
RAHTUM
ARMY.

THEY
SLAUGHTERED
EVERYONE, DESTROYING
ANY MEMORY OF MY
PEOPLE'S EXISTENCE. I'D
NEVER ENCOUNTERED
TRUE EVIL UNTIL THAT
MOMENT...

...AND I
VOWED TO NEVER
ALLOW IT TO HURT
MY PEOPLE
AGAIN.

QUITE
A TALE,
AZAR...



...BUT WHY
TELL ME
THIS?

BECAUSE
OUR FATE IS
NOW SHARED,
KRITON.

YOUR PRESENCE
HERE SEALS YOUR
FUTURE IN DARKNESS...
AS EVERYTHING I COME
INTO CONTACT WITH
EVENTUALLY FALLS
UNDER.



FORTUNATELY...

YOU'RE
NOT
ALONE.



PRAEDUS.

DON'T
WORRY ABOUT
HIM. HE WILL BE
MORE THAN READY
TO *DIE* TO SERVE
HIS CAUSE... AS
AM I.



IS HE?
TREACHERY
IS A RARE
TRAIT.



TRUST ME,
HE WILL DELIVER
THE RAHTUMI
ARMY TO US...



...I NEVER DOUBT MY BROTHER.

SO THEY HIT OUR LEFT FLANK? A BOLD MANEUVER ON THEIR PART. THEY'LL PAY DEARLY FOR THIS.

THE ONE WHO ASSAULTED ME WAS A SETHORU ROYAL GUARD.

I SEE YOU MADE QUICK WORK OF HIM, YOUR HIGHNESS.

WE WERE GRATEFUL TO HAVE YOUR PRESENCE HERE.

BUT WHY WOULD YOU LEAVE THIS LEGION SO UNDERMANNED? THEY ARE THE FORWARD POSITION.

IT DOESN'T SEEM TO MAKE ANY SENSE.

ALL DUE RESPECT TO YOUR NOBLE WAYS, GRACE, BUT I'VE SOARED OVER THE RAHTUMI LEGIONS FAR LONGER THAN YOU'VE FELT THE BREATH IN YOUR LUNGS.

SPEAK AT EASE IN MY PRESENCE, GENERAL PRAEDUS. THERE'S NO NEED FOR FORMALITIES IN A TIME OF WAR.

BUT YOU'D BE WISE NOT TO QUESTION MY CURIOSITY, AS WELL.

THE HARSH REALITY IS I WILL GOVERN THIS KINGDOM ONE DAY, AND CLARIFICATION OF POLICY WILL BE A NECESSARY FUNCTION OF YOUR JOB.

IT WOULD BE WISE NOT TO QUESTION MY STRATEGY IN WAR.

THE HARSH REALITY IS THIS LEGION SERVED ITS DUTY HERE LAST NIGHT. THEY ARE THE OUTER DEFENSE... AND THEY DEFENDED OUR MAIN FORCES ADMIRABLY... EVEN MANAGING SEVERAL SURVIVORS, INCLUDING THE TWO OF YOU.

WELL WITH THAT CLEARED UP, AND SUCH ESTEEMED LEADERSHIP PRESENT... SHALL WE PLAN OUR NEXT COURSE OF ACTION?

ELSEWHERE

KILLING...
TEARING...
ME...

...PAIN...
SUCH...
UNBEARABLE...
ALMOST...
OVER...

...THEY WILL
FEEL... FEEL...
SUCH PAIN...
THEN...

..FINAL
PEACE.

PRRRR

GRAWR

SLURP







TREYBOUGH, YOUR LEGION WILL LEAD THE FRONTAL ATTACK, PRESSING FORWARD TO **ONTIRIA**, THE SETHORU CAPITAL CITY.

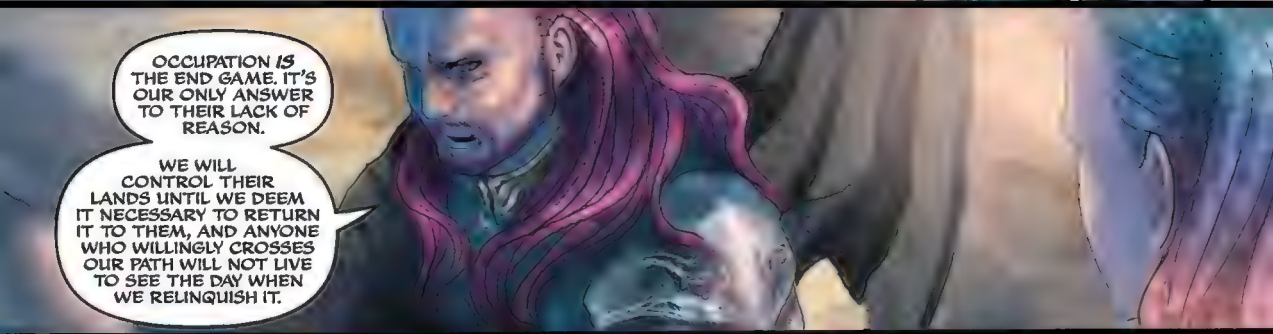
YES, SIR. WE'VE ALREADY FORTIFIED POSITIONS ALONG THE WINDY PASS IN PREPARATION. ALL WE NEED IS THE WORD TO MOVE IN.

IN DUE TIME. THE CITY IS HEAVILY CONCENTRATED WITH THEIR ROYAL GUARDS. FIRST WE'LL OCCUPY THE LANDS SURROUNDING THE SETHORU CAPITAL, BEGINNING WITH THE TREE VILLAGE OF KARTHIA.

OCCUPATION?

IS **THIS** YOUR OBJECTIVE, GENERAL? TO SUBJECT OUR WAY OF LIFE UPON THEM THROUGH POWER AND FORCE?

AND HOW WOULD YOU MANAGE AN ENTIRE RACE OF PEOPLE WITHOUT FORCE?



OCCUPATION **IS** THE END GAME. IT'S OUR ONLY ANSWER TO THEIR LACK OF REASON.

WE WILL CONTROL THEIR LANDS UNTIL WE DEEM IT NECESSARY TO RETURN IT TO THEM, AND ANYONE WHO WILLINGLY CROSSES OUR PATH WILL NOT LIVE TO SEE THE DAY WHEN WE RELINQUISH IT.



GENERAL SIR, ARE YOU CERTAIN THIS IS THE BEST COURSE OF ACTION?

THIS COULD LEAD TO MANY DEATHS ON BOTH SIDES.

ENOUGH!

I GAVE YOU BOTH LENIENCE BECAUSE OF YOUR GIRLFRIEND'S STATUS OF NOBILITY.

BUT THIS IS STILL MY ARMY. I WON'T BE SECOND-GUESSED BY A LOWLY PRIVATE IN MY BATTALION. YOU FOLLOW MY ORDERS.

OF WHICH I COMMAND YOU TO RETURN GRACE TO EMPYREA UNHARMED.

I'M NEEDED IN BATTLE!

YOU'RE NOW NEEDED IN EMPYREA.

NOW GO BEFORE I RELIEVE YOU OF YOUR DUTY ALTOGETHER.



THEY WILL
EITHER HIT THE
OUTLYING VILLAGES
OF KARTHIA OR
HEDAFEX... OR
BOTH.

BUT OUR
LEGIONS ARE
STRETCHED TOO THIN.
WE'VE NOT ENOUGH
MANPOWER TO
DEFEND BOTH
PROVINCES.



WE
DON'T HAVE A
CHOICE THEN, WE
MUST DECIDE TO
DEFEND ONE.

BUT IF THE
OTHER VILLAGE FALLS
INTO THEIR CONTROL, IT
WOULD SURELY CRIPPLE
OUR ENTIRE DEFENSE
STRATEGY.

NOT TO MENTION
THE PEOPLE TEETER ON
THE BRINK OF REBELLION. THEY
ARE TIRED AND FRUSTRATED. AN
OCCUPATION OF OUR LANDS
WOULD SURELY SEND THEM
OVER THE EDGE OF
MADNESS.



IT'S BEYOND
OUR CONTROL
NOW...

HEDAFAX
LIES CLOSER TO
ONTIRIA, SEND YOUR
ARMY TO THEIR
PROVINCE.



GEOGRAPHY
HAS DEALT KARTHIA
A TRAGIC
REALITY...

WE MUST
LEAVE THEM
TO THEIR OWN
DEFENSES.

ELSEWHERE.

WAIT UP!
WHY ARE YOU
FLYING SO FAST? YOU
DON'T EVEN KNOW
WHERE YOU'RE
GOING.

I DON'T
CARE.

I'M NOT GOING
BACK TO EMPYREA, AND
NOW I'VE BEEN ORDERED
OUT OF THE BATTLE. I'VE
SEEN MY LEGION MURDERED,
MY TITLE... DISGRACED!

THERE'S MORE
IMPORTANT THINGS
THAN YOUR NAME,
KELSYN.

EASY
FOR YOU
TO SAY.

THAT'S NOT
FAIR. YOU KNOW
I'D SACRIFICE ALL
OF IT FOR MY
BELIEFS...

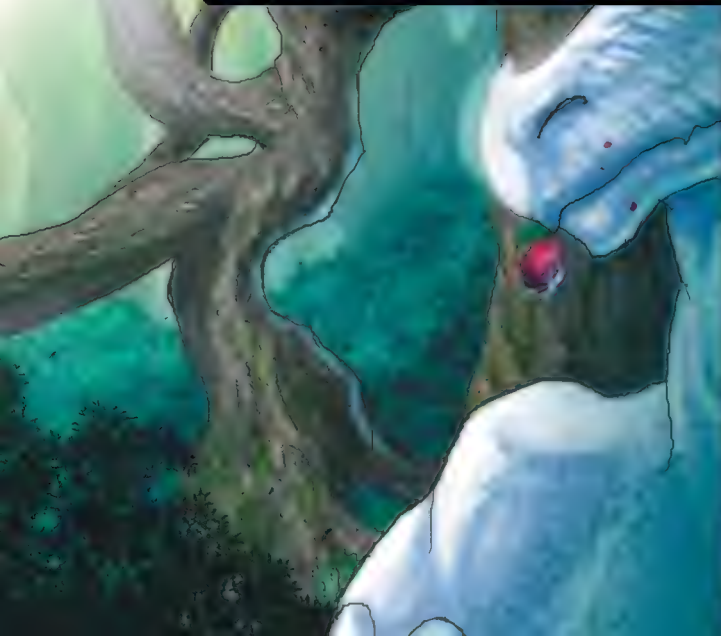
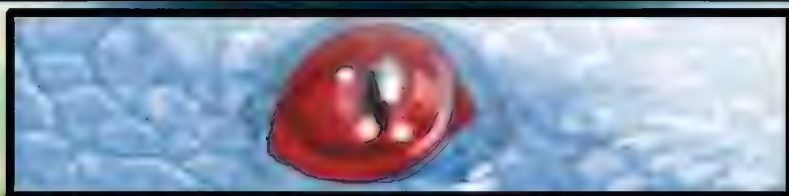
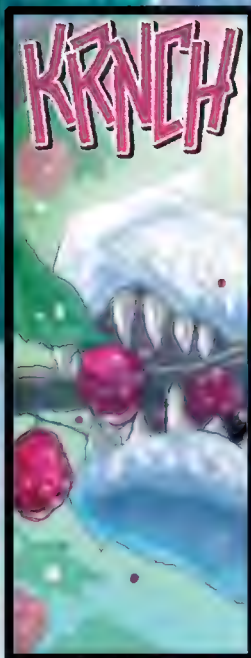
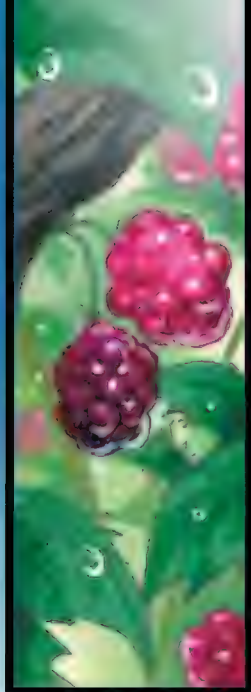
...FOR
YOU.

I'M...
SORRY. YOU'VE
ALREADY SACRIFICED
EVERYTHING FOR ME...
IF NOT FOR YOUR
ARRIVAL, NONE OF MY
LEGION WOULD'VE
SURVIVED.

I DO
WHAT I CAN
MY LOVE.

WELL THAT'S
GREAT... BECAUSE
YOUR SERVICES
ARE NEEDED
AGAIN...

...I THINK
WE'RE
LOST.





AAWRR

GOOD
GIRL.

EAT. YOU
MUST STAY
STRONG.

SUCH A
MIRACULOUS
OCCURRENCE TAKING
PLACE BENEATH
YOUR FLESH.

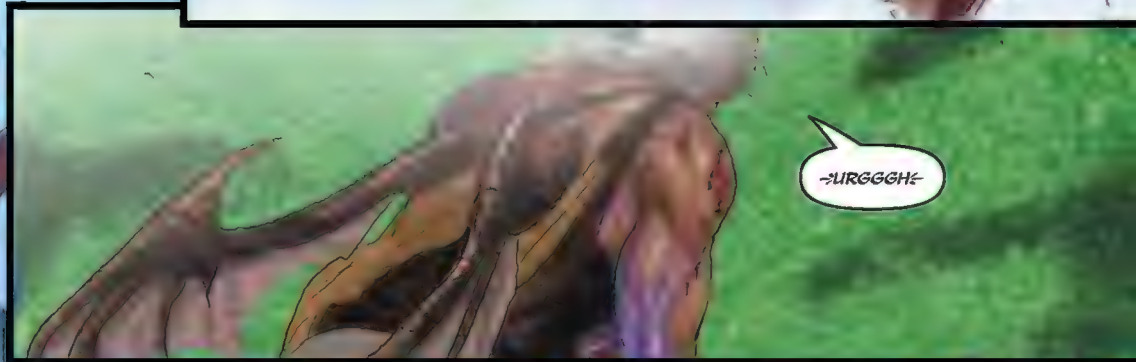
MY MAGIC
CONSUMES
YOU...

...YET YOU
SURVIVE.

YOU'RE
SURVIVAL GIVES
ME HOPE...



-SURGGH-
ALMOST...
THERE...





A dark, atmospheric illustration of a village at night. A large, gnarled tree trunk dominates the left side of the frame. In the background, a village with traditional houses is visible, some with glowing windows. A large flock of birds is flying in the sky, which is illuminated by a warm, orange and yellow light, possibly from a sunset or a fire. The overall mood is mysterious and urgent.

..BUT WE
SHOULD GET
INSIDE.



MOVE
IN QUICK
SOLDIERS!

BURN
ANYTHING THAT
THREATENS
YOU!!



AHHH!



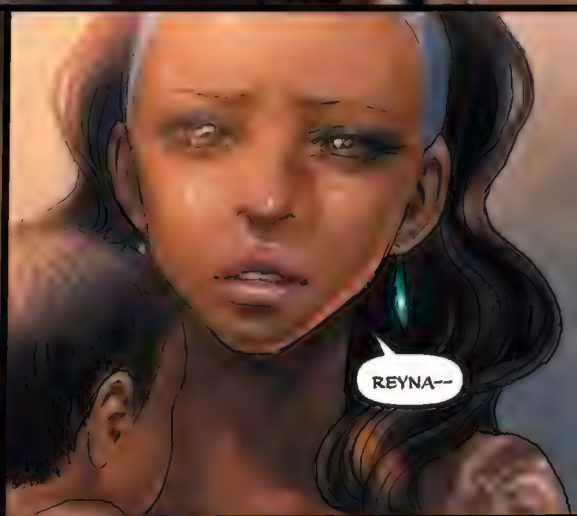
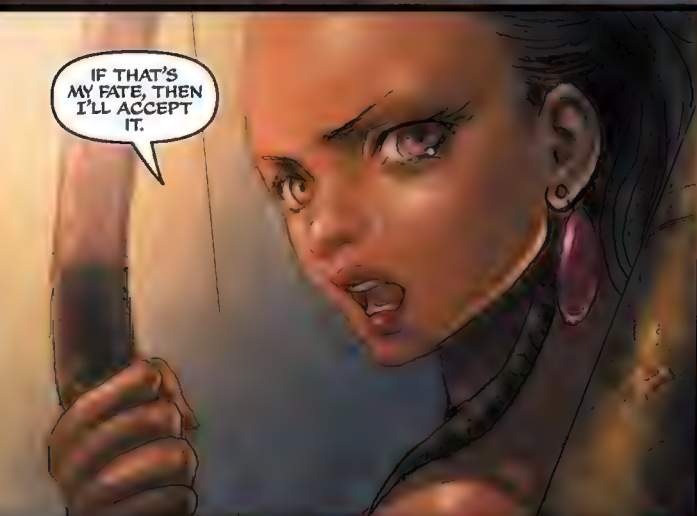
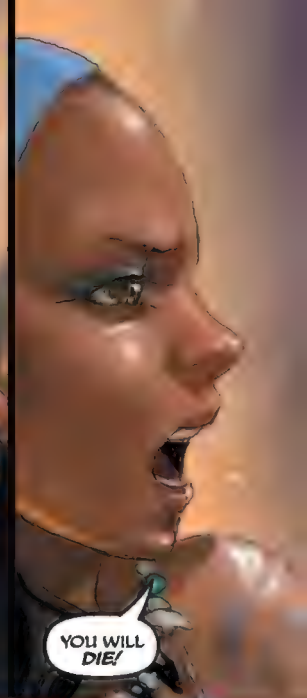
THAT'S IT,
TRY TO
ESCAPE!

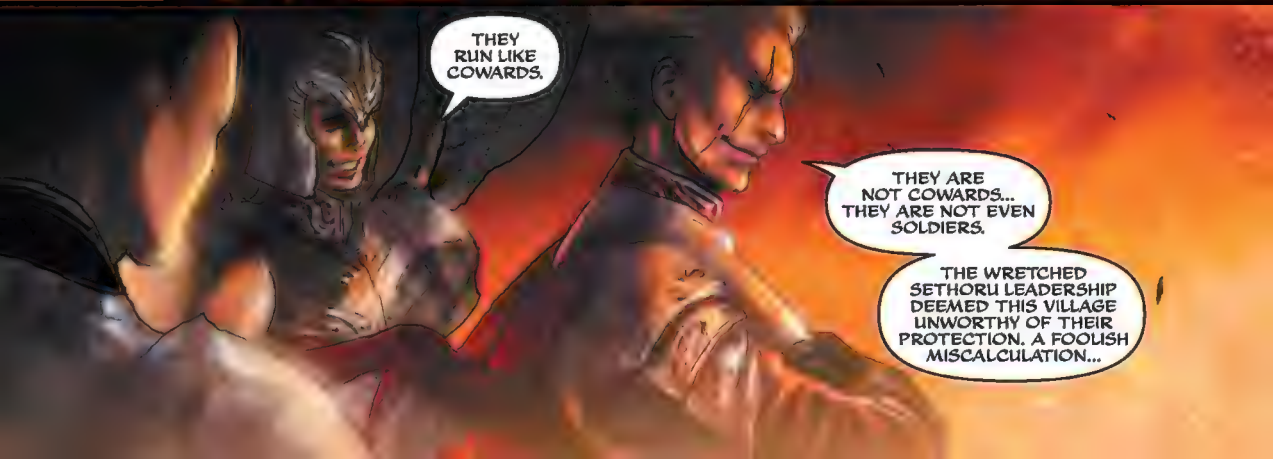


LAUGH!



WAKE UP!!
WE MUST
FLY!





THEY
RUN LIKE
COWARDS.

THEY ARE
NOT COWARDS...
THEY ARE NOT EVEN
SOLDIERS.

THE WRETCHED
SETHORU LEADERSHIP
DEEMED THIS VILLAGE
UNWORTHY OF THEIR
PROTECTION. A FOOLISH
MISCALCULATION...



..AND SO
THEIR DEMISE
BEGINS.



DO NOT...
~URGH~ GIVE...
MERCY!



GIVE
THEM...



...DEATH!

TO BE
CONTINUED
IN...

MICHAEL TURNER'S
SOULFIRE
SHADOWMAGIC #4

ASPEN
Vol. 1

#4
OF 5
COVER A

MICHAEL TURNER'S
SOULFIRE
& SHADOW MAGIC



THE ARMS OF FATE

CHAPTER 4 OF 5

STORY BY
VINCE
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ILLUSTRATIONS BY
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LETTERS BY
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SPECIAL THANKS
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MICHAEL TURNER'S SOULFIRE: SHADOW MACITM Vol. 1 Issue 4

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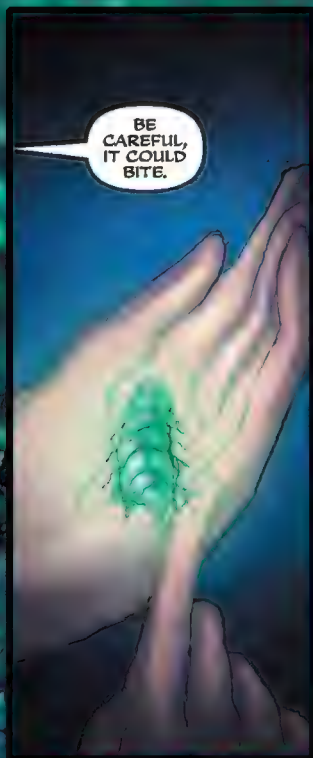
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BEAUTIFUL,
AREN'T
THEY?



BE
CAREFUL,
IT COULD
BITE.

YOU
SERIOUSLY
NEED TO USE
THOSE WINGS OF
YOURS AND GET
OUT MORE.

THESE
PRECIOUS
LITTLE THINGS
HAVE ONE SOLE
PURPOSE IN
LIFE...

...TO BEAR
LIGHT.

IS THERE **ANY**
MORE MARVELOUS
FUNCTION FOR A
CREATURE TO POSSESS
THAN THE ABILITY
TO ENLIGHTEN?

THAT
STILL DOESN'T
MEAN THEY
DON'T HAVE
TEETH.

BESIDES,
MAYBE WE
SHOULD FOCUS
MORE ON OUR
CURRENT
DILEMMA.



WELL,
ONE PROBLEM
IS SOLVED. I
KNOW WHERE
WE ARE.

THIS
PATCH OF TREES
IS KNOWN IN RAHTUMI
LEGEND AS THE ANUN
GAAL-- OR NORTHERN
LIGHT. BELOW US SITS THE
PLAINS OF KARTHIA, WHERE
THE ESCAPED SETHORU
CITIZENS ONCE SOUGHT
REFUGE IN THE
BATTLE OF KAN.

SO
WE'RE STILL
IN SETHORU
TERRITORY,
GREAT.

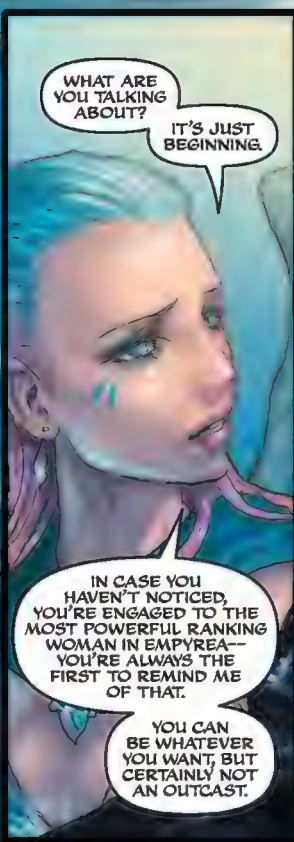


AT
LEAST WE'RE
TOGETHER.

SIGH

YEAH, AT
THE EXPENSE
OF MY REPUTATION
IN THE HONOR
GUARD.

MY LIFE
IS OVER. I'M
GONNA BE AN
OUTCAST
FROM HERE
ON OUT.

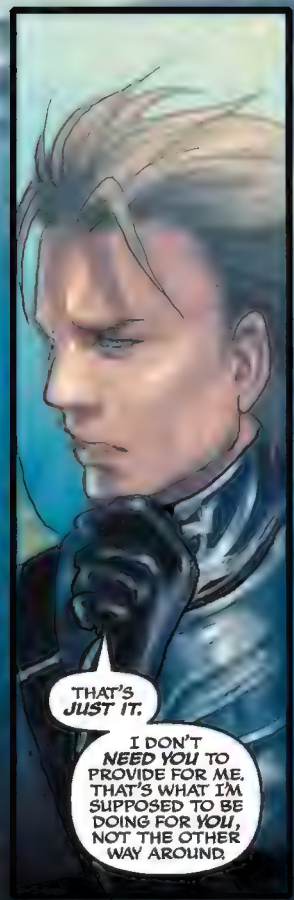


WHAT ARE
YOU TALKING
ABOUT?

IT'S JUST
BEGINNING.

IN CASE YOU
HAVEN'T NOTICED,
YOU'RE ENGAGED TO THE
MOST POWERFUL RANKING
WOMAN IN EMPYREA—
YOU'RE ALWAYS THE
FIRST TO REMIND ME
OF THAT.

YOU CAN
BE WHATEVER
YOU WANT, BUT
CERTAINLY NOT
AN OUTCAST.



THAT'S
JUST IT.

I DON'T
NEED YOU TO
PROVIDE FOR ME.
THAT'S WHAT I'M
SUPPOSED TO BE
DOING FOR YOU,
NOT THE OTHER
WAY AROUND.



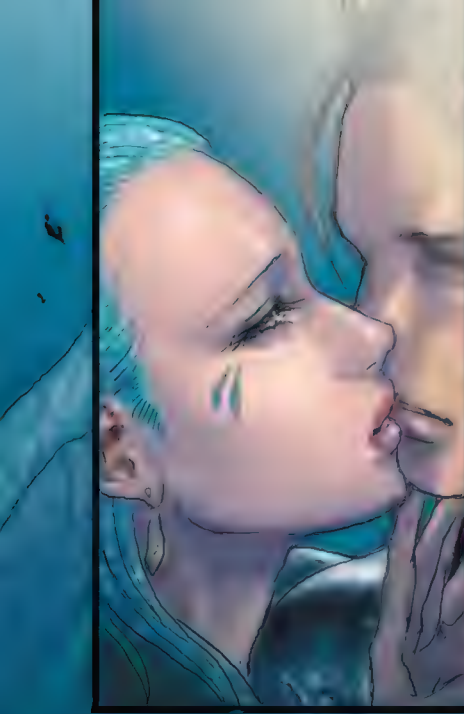
WELL
THEN DEAR,
YOU SEDUCED
THE *WRONG*
WOMAN.

THE LAST
THING I NEED
IS FOR SOMEONE
TO PROVIDE
FOR ME.

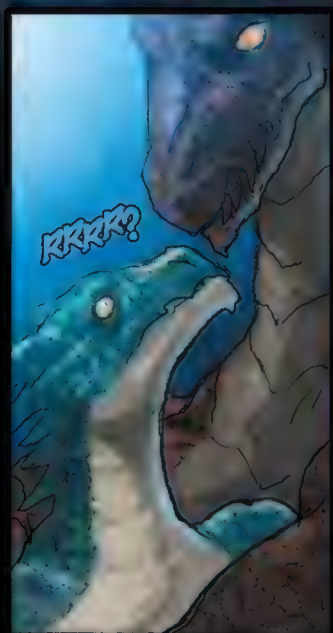
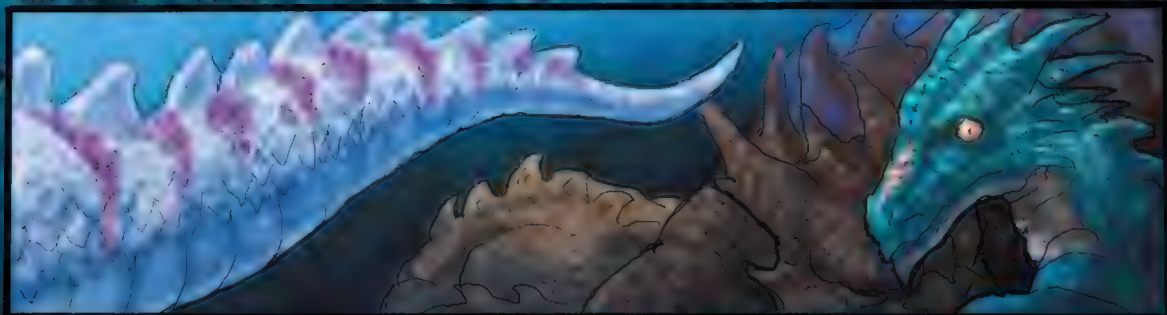
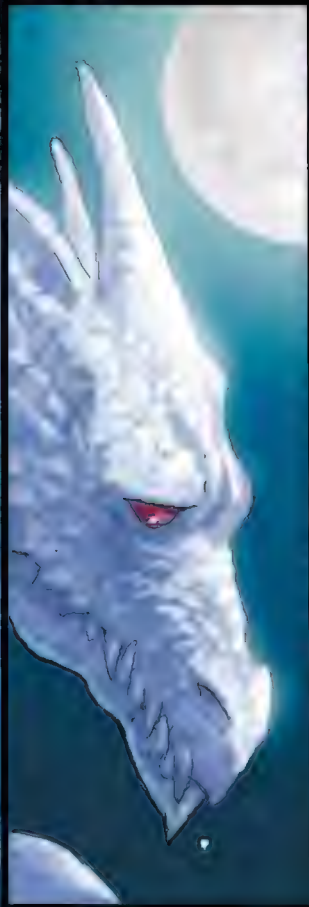
WHAT I
NEED...



...IS FOR
SOMEONE TO
LOVE ME.



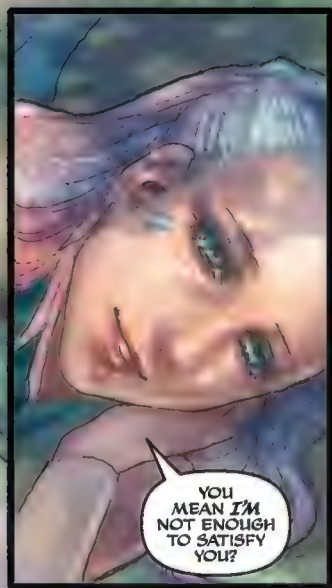
MEANWHILE.





CAN WE
LIE LIKE THIS
FOREVER?

EVENTUALLY
WE'D GET
HUNGRY.



YOU
MEAN I'M
NOT ENOUGH
TO SATISFY
YOU?



WAIT...
DO YOU HEAR
THAT?



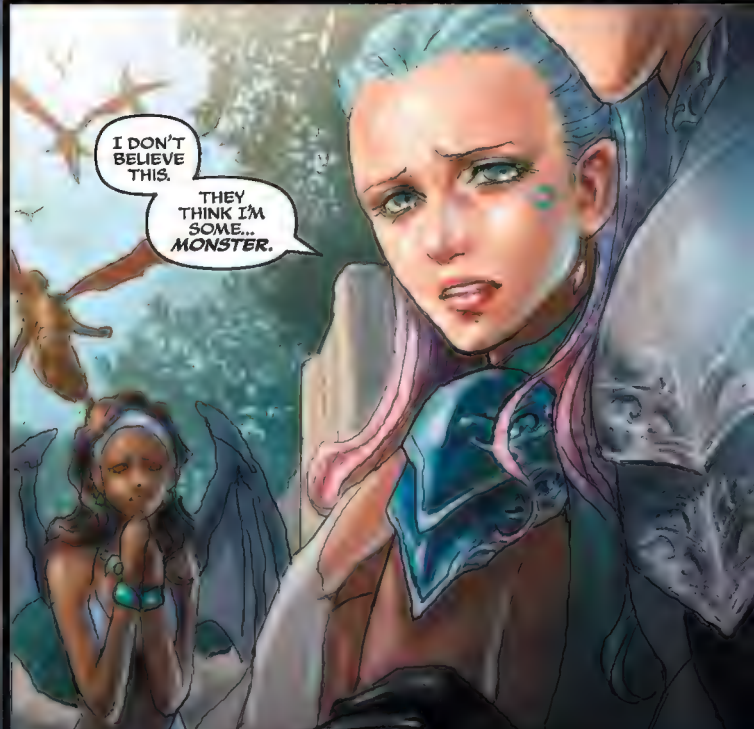
IT'S PROBABLY
SOME WILD
DRAGONS.



UM, GRACE...
THESE ARE NO
DRAGONS.

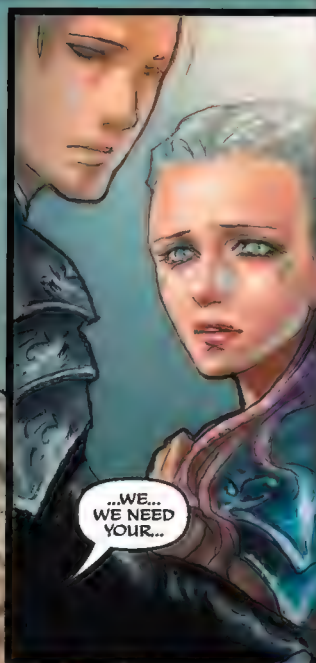


THEY'RE
SETHORU.





I DON'T...



...WE...
WE NEED
YOUR...

HEY, IT'S
OKAY. YOU'RE
OKAY NOW.

TELL
ME WHAT'S
HAPPENED
TO THESE
PEOPLE?

MY SISTER
REYNA, SHE
IS... STILL
THERE...

I... I NEED
TO GO TO
HER.

WHERE?

GRACE.

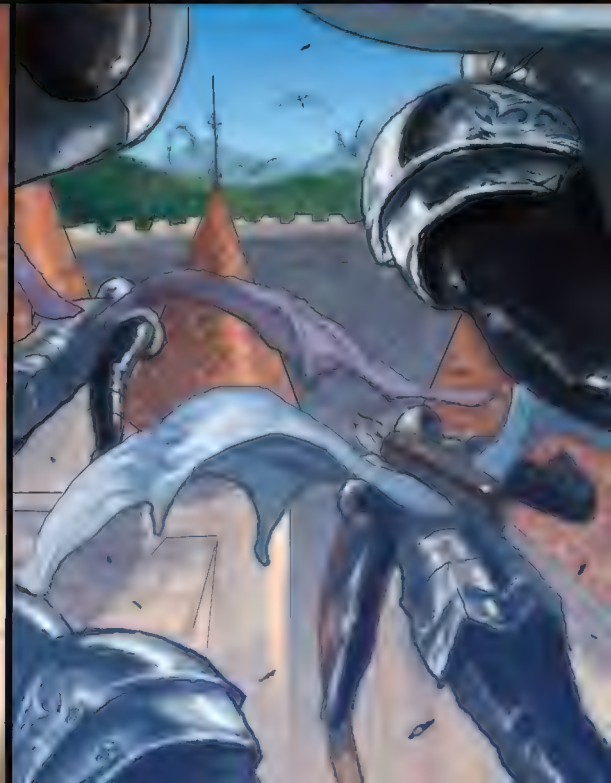
GIVE US
A MOMENT,
KELSYN.

I KNOW
WHERE.



THEY'RE
REFUGEES.







DEFEND
THE CITY SOLDIERS!
SEND THEIR BODIES
FALLING TO THE
DIRT BELOW!



KELSYN,
WE HAVE TO DO
SOMETHING.

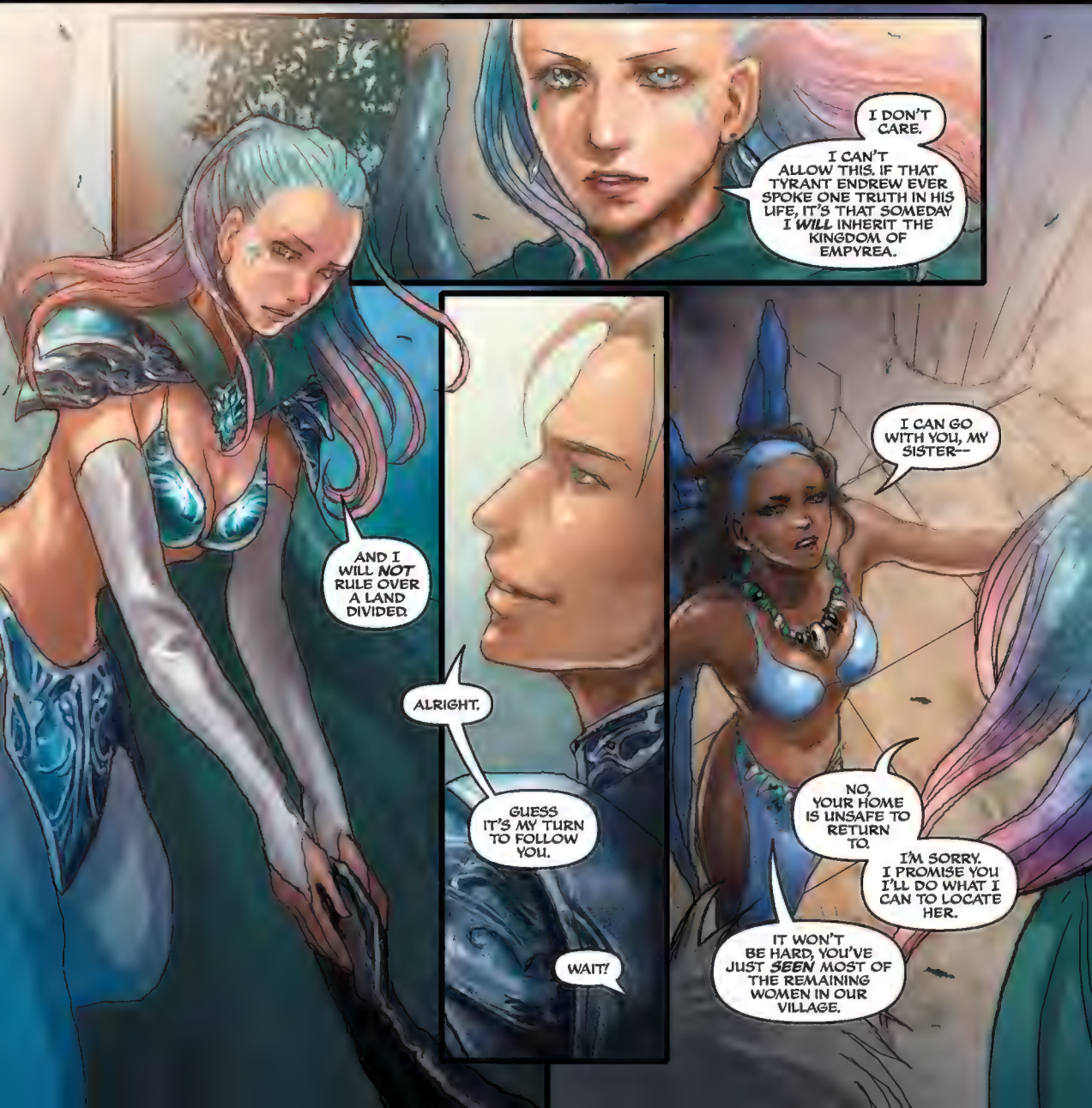
WHAT
CAN WE DO? WE
HEARD PRAEDUS'
PLAN, THIS IS
PART OF IT.

EVEN
SO, WE'RE
ONLY TWO
PEOPLE.

YES,
AND I *DIDN'T*
AGREE WITH
IT THEN.

I DON'T
KNOW WHAT HIS
PLAN IS, BUT HIS
WAR CAMPAIGN
ISN'T ABOUT
CONTROL...

...IT'S ABOUT
MURDER.



I DON'T
CARE.

I CAN'T
ALLOW THIS. IF THAT
TYRANT ENDREW EVER
SPOKE ONE TRUTH IN HIS
LIFE, IT'S THAT SOMEDAY
I *WILL* INHERIT THE
KINGDOM OF
EMPYREA.

AND I
WILL NOT
RULE OVER
A LAND
DIVIDED.

ALRIGHT.

GUESS
IT'S MY TURN
TO FOLLOW
YOU.

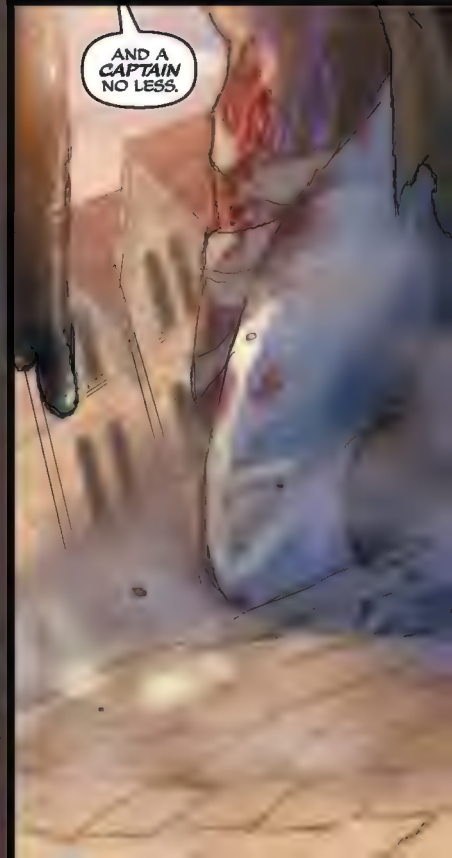
WAIT?

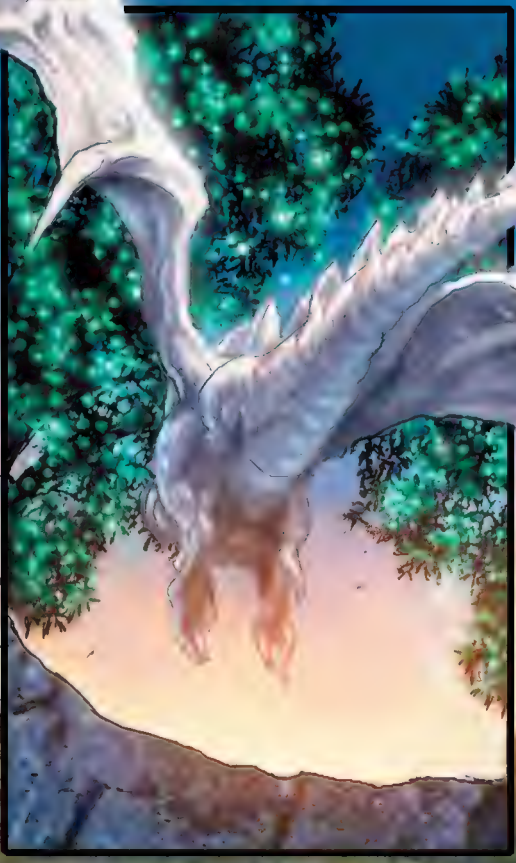
I CAN GO
WITH YOU, MY
SISTER—

NO,
YOUR HOME
IS UNSAFE TO
RETURN
TO.

I'M SORRY.
I PROMISE YOU
I'LL DO WHAT I
CAN TO LOCATE
HER.

IT WON'T
BE HARD, YOU'VE
JUST *SEEN* MOST OF
THE REMAINING
WOMEN IN OUR
VILLAGE.





SNIFF
SNIFF





IT'S
ALMOST A
GAME, IS IT
NOT?



THEY'VE
TRAVELED SUCH A
GREAT DISTANCE WITH
SUCH AN UNDERMANNED
FORCE... WE ALLOW THEM
TO GET AS CLOSE AS
POSSIBLE...



...THEN WE
ANNIHILATE
THEM.



RAISE YOUR
HEAD, SHOW SOME
HONOR SETHORU,
BEFORE I PUT YOU
OUT OF YOUR
MISERY.

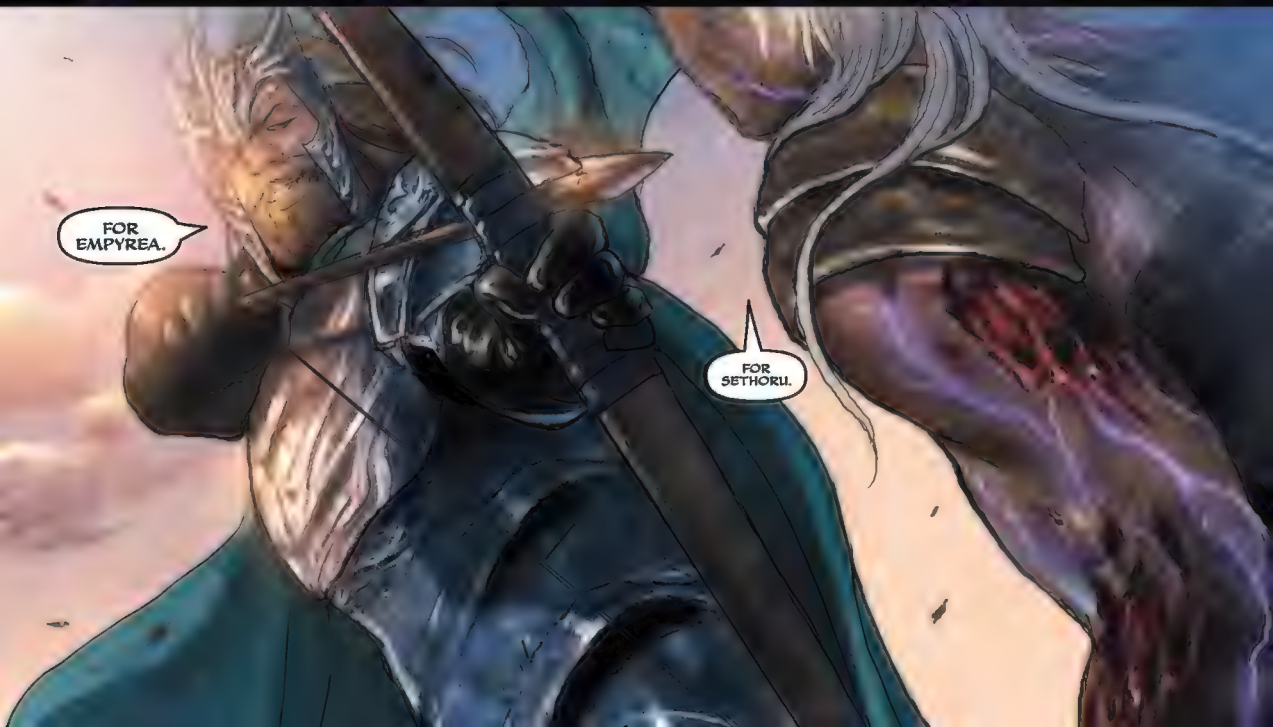


...YOUR... YOUR MISERY...

NOT FROM WHERE I'M STANDING.



COWARD... FINISH ME...
-UGH-



FOR EMPYREA.

FOR SETHORLI.



LORDS...





C'MON,
SHE'S *JUST* A
GIRL. BRING HER
FORWARD...

...OUR
SPOIL OF
WAR.

DON'T
WORRY, LITTLE
GIRL...

...I
LIKE IT
ROUGH.

SIR! GRACE
OF EMPYREA
APPROACHES!

OF COURSE,
EXCELLENT
TIMING.

KEEP THIS
ONE SUBDUED.
I'LL RETURN FOR
HER SHORTLY.



YOUR
HIGNESS.

I THOUGHT
YOU AND YOUR...
LOVER WERE
BANISHED
FROM THE WAR
EFFORT?



DON'T
QUESTION ME.
IT'S **YOU** I SEEK
ANSWERS
FROM.

WHAT'S
THE MEANING
OF THIS? THIS ISN'T
OCCUPATION. WITH THE
DEVASTATION YOU'VE
CAUSED THERE WILL
BE **NOTHING** LEFT
TO OCCUPY.



I'M MERELY
FOLLOWING
ORDERS.

OF WHICH
I MAY REMIND
YOU, WERE GIVEN
IN **YOUR**
COMPANY.



ARE YOU
COMPLETELY
BLIND TO WHAT'S
GOING ON?

PRAEDUS
DOESN'T WANT TO
WIN THIS WAR, HE
WANTS TO COMMIT
GENOCIDE!



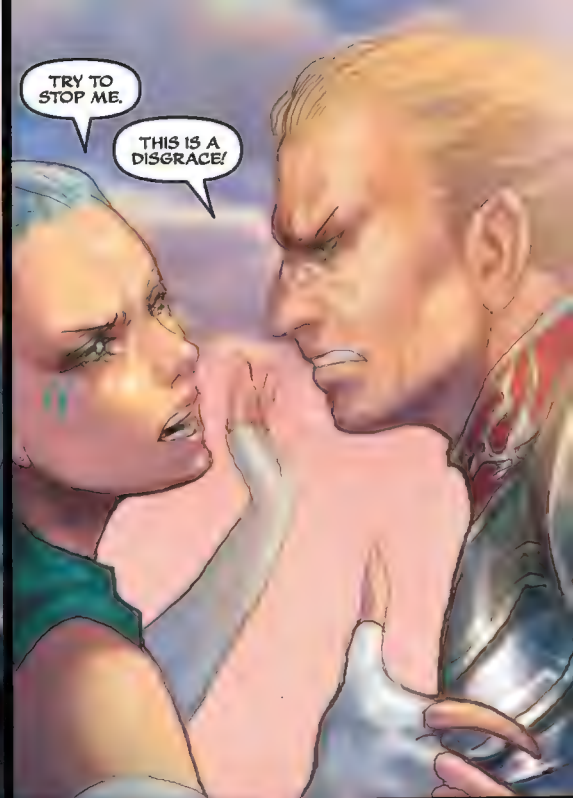
AND
I **WON'T**
ALLOW
IT.



I'M
RELIEVING
YOU OF YOUR
DUTY.

WHAT???

YOU
DON'T HAVE
THE AUTHORITY
YET!



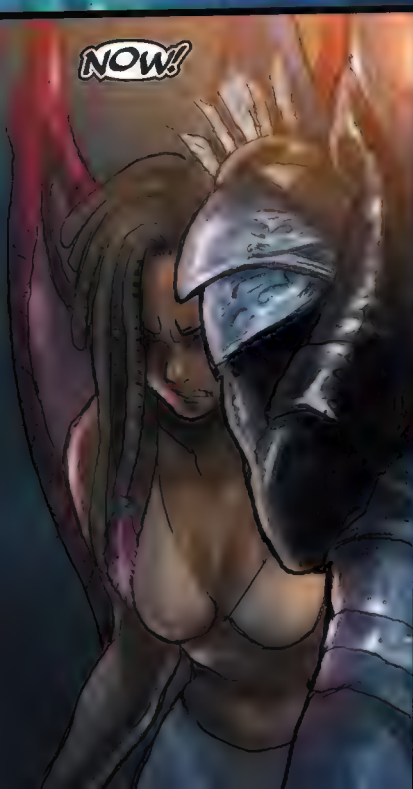
TRY TO
STOP ME.

THIS IS A
DISGRACE!



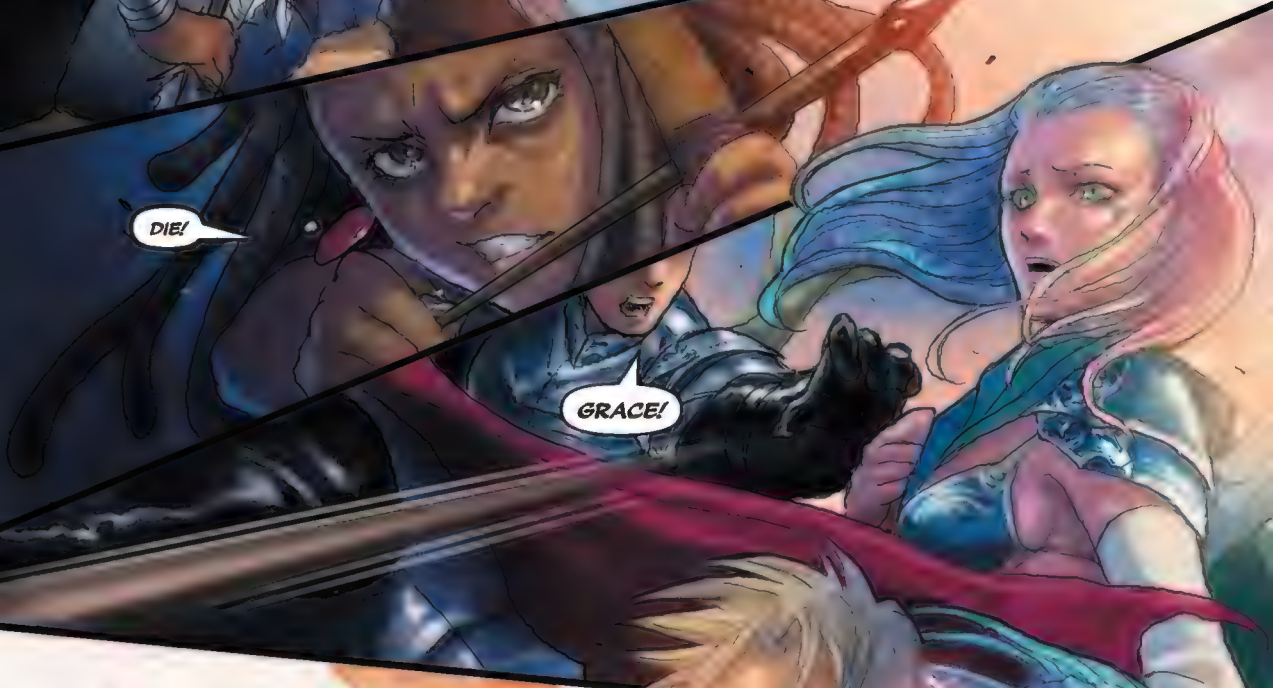
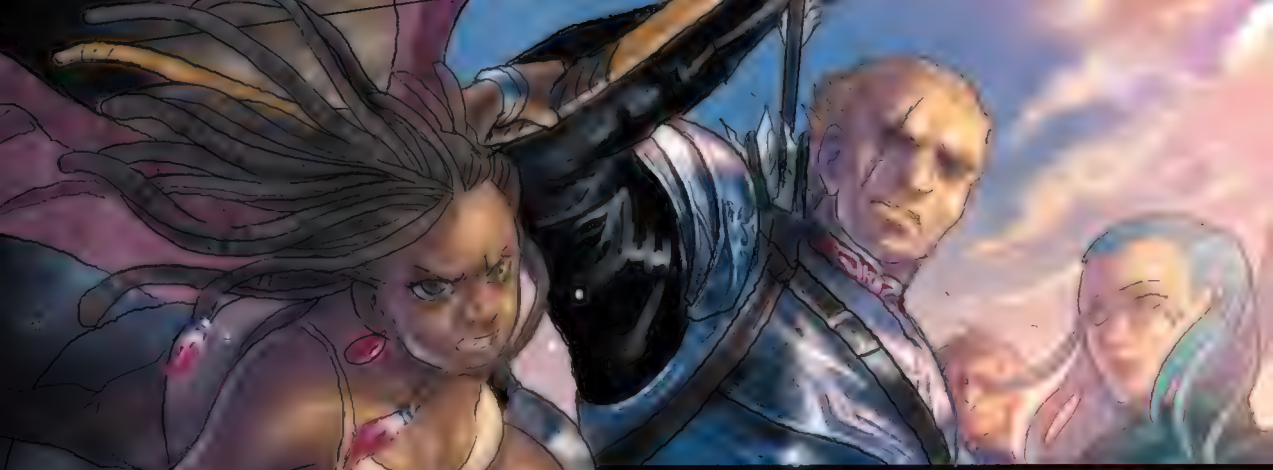
I
COULDN'T
AGREE
MORE.

SENTRY!
RESTRAIN YOUR
CAPTAIN!



NOW!







YOUR
TURN.



KELSYN/
NO! PLEASE
NO!

NOT LIKE
THIS!



PLEASE!

NO...



GRACE...

STOP
DON'T.

...I... I
LOVE...

PLEASE...





TO BE
CONCLUDED
IN...

MICHAEL TURNER'S
SOULFIRE #5
SHADOW MAGIC

ASPEN
Vol. 1

#5
OF 5
COVER A

MICHAEL TURNER'S
SULFIRE
& SHADOW MAGIC



THE BOUNDS OF ETERNITY

CHAPTER 5 OF 5

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LETTERS BY
JOSH
REED

SPECIAL THANKS
AKHTIDE YANAGI

Scriptcase created by
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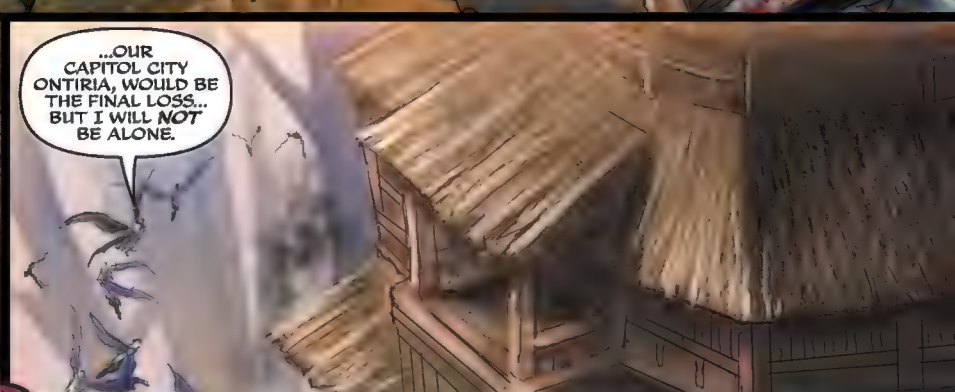
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THE
WIZARD AZAR
PREDICTED THIS
FATE...

...HE TOLD
ME MANY SETHORI
AND RAHTUMI
WOULD FALL FROM
THE SKY...

...COLLATERAL
DAMAGE... FROM
A NECESSARY
WAR...



...OUR
CAPITOL CITY
ONTIRIA, WOULD BE
THE FINAL LOSS...
BUT I WILL NOT
BE ALONE.



RAHTUMI! KEEP
A PERIMETER, MAKE
SURE HE DOES NOT
ESCAPE!



I WILL
BRING HIM
TO JUSTICE
MYSELF.

CRASH



IT'S BEEN
A LONG
TIME...



...BROTHER.

EVERYTHING
WE PLANNED.
THE SETHORU
BROUGHT TO
THEIR DEMISE,
JUST AS YOU
PREDICTED.

IT HAS,
PRAEDUS.

WELCOME
TO MY CITY...
OR WHAT'S
LEFT OF IT.



NOT
EVERYTHING...
NOT YET.



THERE
IS **ONE** LAST
THING WE MUST
DO...

...OUR
SACRIFICE.



WHAT?
NO...

...I DID WHAT
YOU WANTED. I
BROUGHT DOWN THE
MIGHT OF THE RAHTUMI
ARMY ON YOU. EVERY
STEP OF THE WAY I
COERCED OUR
RACES INTO
WAR.

YOUR
DUTY HAS BEEN
SERVED, YOUNGER
BROTHER. HOWEVER,
NOW YOUR DUTY
CALLS FOR
SACRIFICE...



...OUR
SACRIFICE.

DRAGON!

SHOOT
IT!

SO THIS
IS WHAT IT'S
ALWAYS BEEN ABOUT?
DESTRUCTION ON
BOTH SIDES? I
NEVER WANTED
THIS!



YOU
NEVER HAD
A CHOICE!

AZAR'S
DRAGON IS
ALREADY UPON
US. THE MAGIC
COURSING
THROUGH IT WILL
END US ALL
UPON IMPACT.



I CHOSE
FOR US...

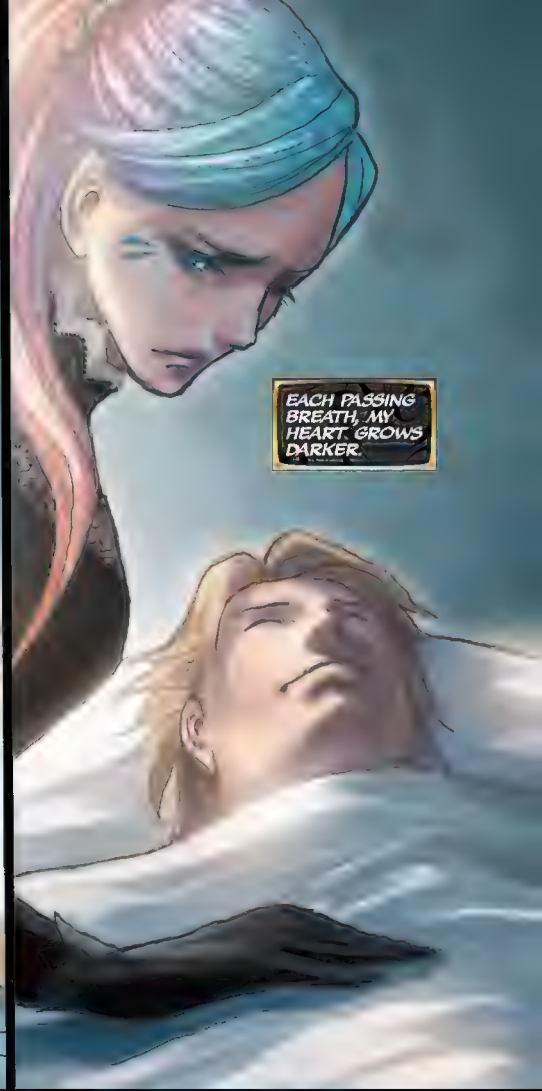


GODS...

...FOR
SETHORU.

I'VE LOST TRACK
OF THE TIME
SINCE KELSYN
LEFT ME.

EACH MOMENT
IS... WORSE
THAN BEFORE.



EACH PASSING
BREATH, MY
HEART GROWS
DARKER.



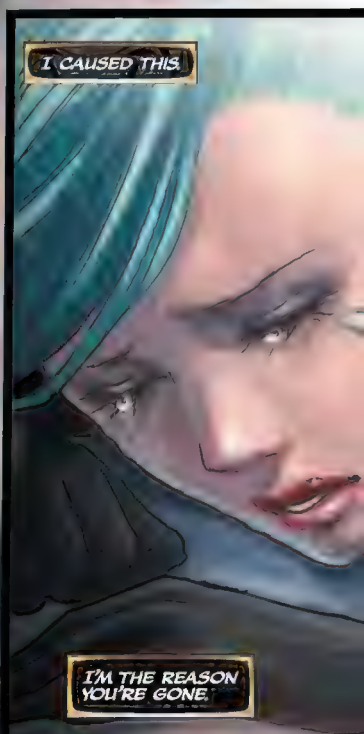
THE GRIEF...

...CONSUMES ME...



...YET MY GRIEF IS
OVERWHELMED
BY RAGE.

I AM TO BLAME.



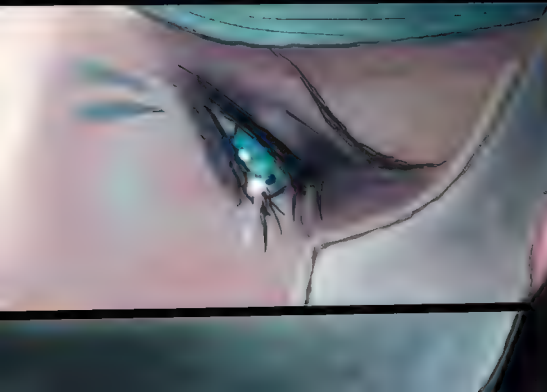
I CAUSED THIS.

I'M THE REASON
YOU'RE GONE.



I WOULD TAKE MY
LIFE AND JOIN YOU
IN A HEARTBEAT...

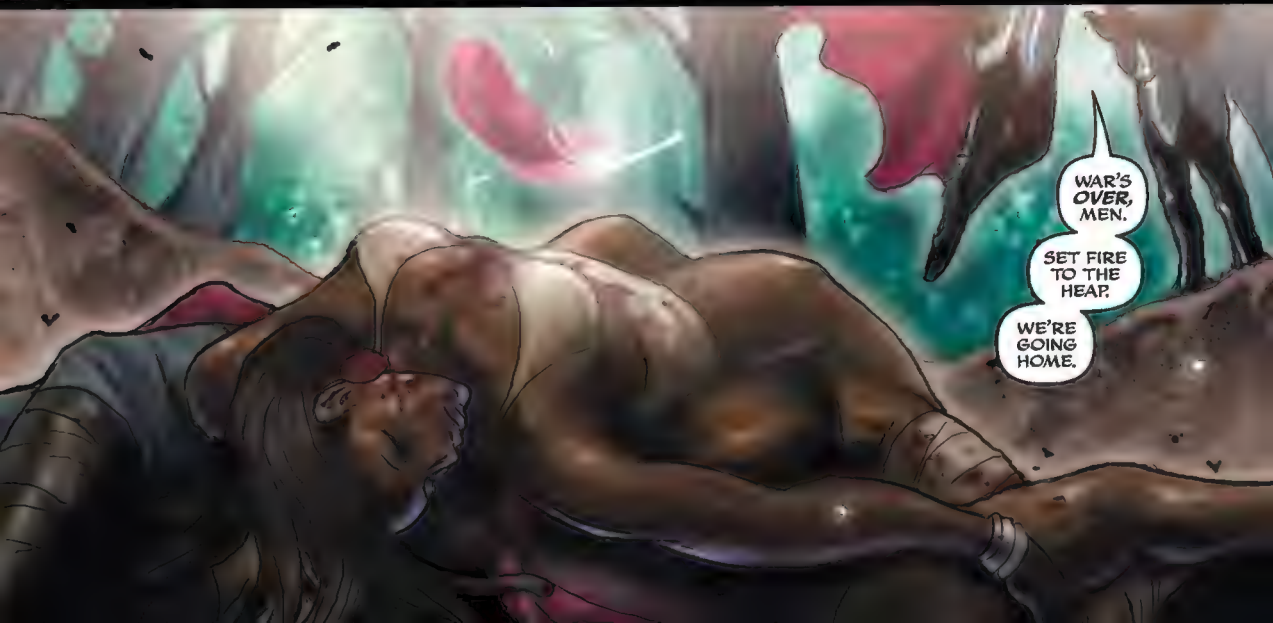
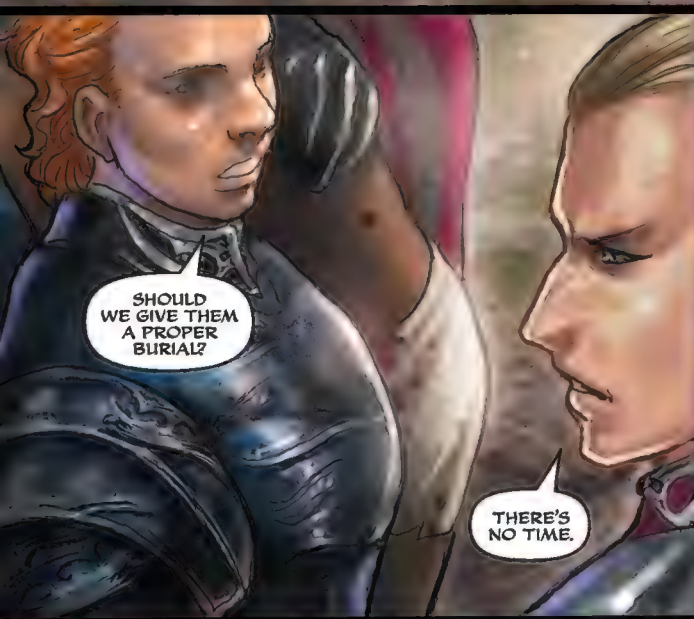
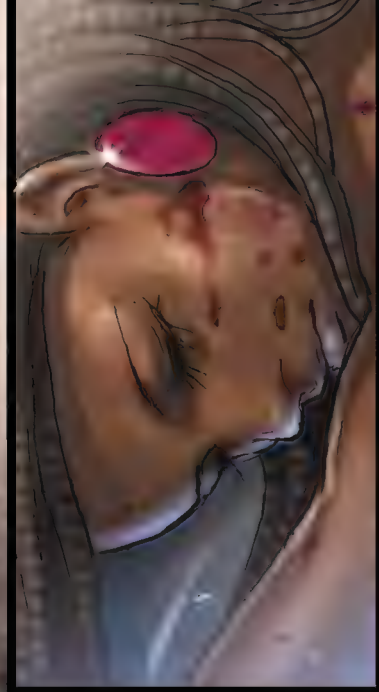
...BUT MY DEATH
WOULD NOT BE
THE LAST.

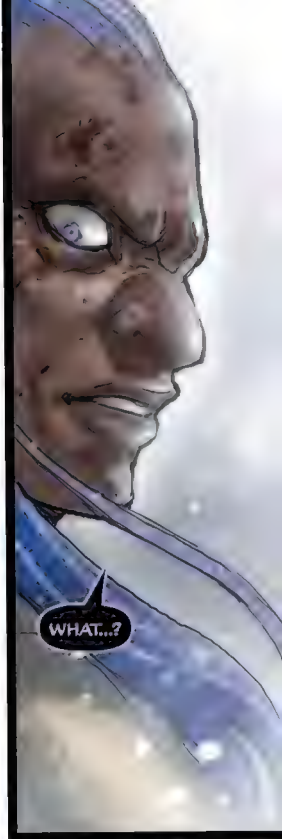
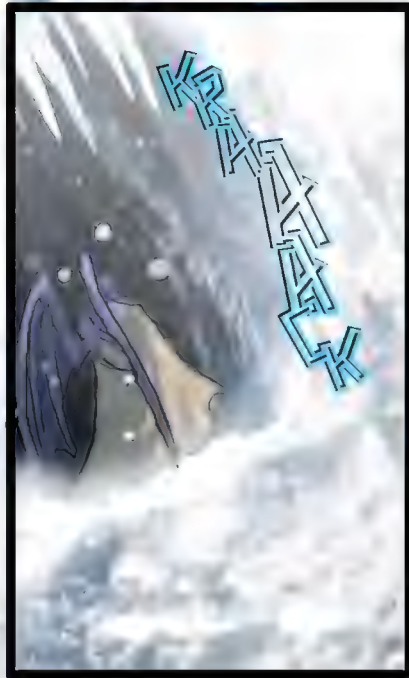


NOT AS LONG
AS HE STILL
BREATHES.

NO...

...ONE MORE
MUST PERISH
TO SAVE US ALL.







DIE UNDER
THE WEIGHT
OF YOUR OWN
SOLACE,
WIZARD



DIE...



...BECAUSE
YOU *DESERVE*
TO

RUMBLE

CRRAAACK

GRACE OF
EMPYREA...

SO *THIS* IS
THE EMPYREAN
RESPONSE?

EVEN YOU
CANNOT
END THIS.



FOR ONCE,
I DIDN'T FORESEE
THIS REPRISE
FROM THE RAHTUMI.

I EXPECTED
A LEGION, NOT A
PERSON OF NOBILITY.

OR A
WOMAN.

YOUR
TRAIL OF DEATH
WAS EASY TO
FOLLOW.

THE BLOOD
OF COUNTLESS
VICTIMS-- RAHTUMI
AND SETHORU--
IS ON YOUR
HANDS.

THE
DEATH OF
MY LOVER.

YOUR
END IS NOW
WIZARD.

I'VE COME
ALONE TO PUT
A STOP TO IT
ALL-- TO YOU!



AN
END?

DON'T YOU
SEE? THIS IS
ONLY THE
BEGINNING.

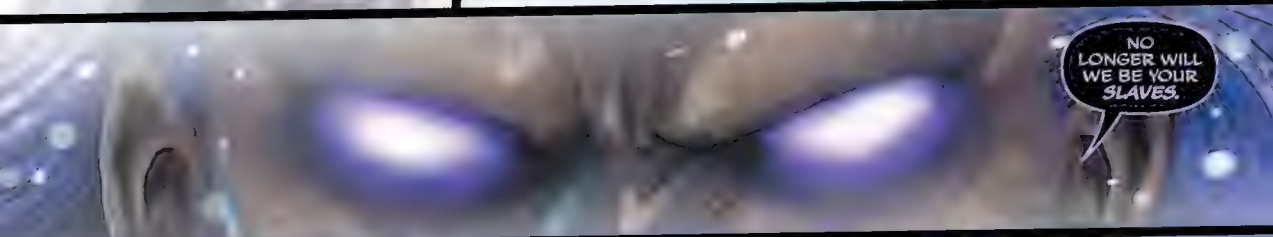
MY ACTIONS
ARE BUT A SINGLE
DROP OF WATER IN
AN OCEAN OF
PREJUDICE.

THE DEATH
MY MAGIC HAS
CLAIMED WILL SERVE
AS A CATALYST FOR
TRUE CHANGE.

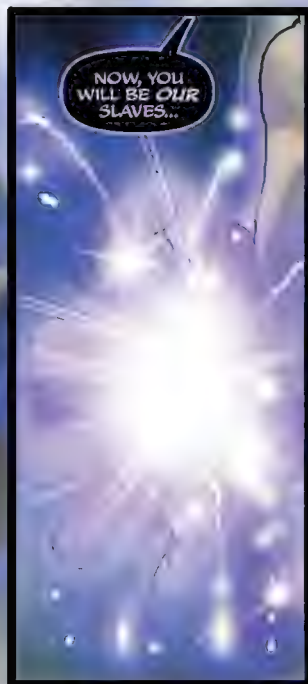
NO LONGER
WILL THERE BE
SUCH BLIND CONTROL
OVER US WITHOUT
THE THOUGHT OF
REPERCUSSION.



NO LONGER
WILL YOUR KIND BE
ABLE TO RESTRAIN
OUR WAY OF
LIFE.



NO
LONGER WILL
WE BE YOUR
SLAVES.



NOW, YOU
WILL BE OUR
SLAVES...



...NOW
YOU WILL
SUFFER!



-UNNNHH-

IT'S
YOU WHO
DOESN'T
GET IT.

YOU DON'T
UNDERSTAND
THE POWER
OF MAGIC.

OF MY
MAGIC!



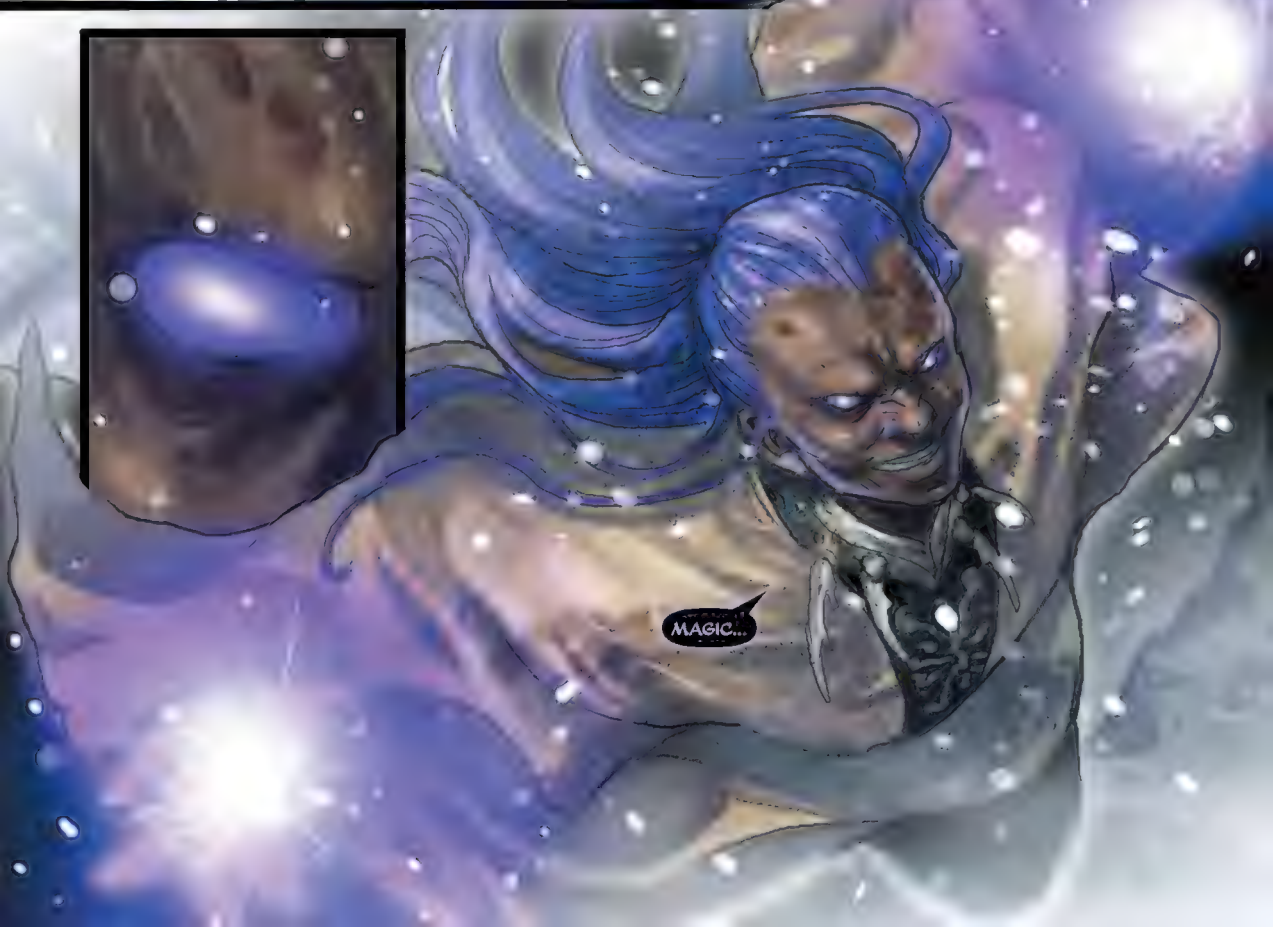
FOOLISH GIRL.

I UNDERSTAND ALL TOO WELL THE ENDLESS BOUNDS OF MAGIC.

RAAAAWR



IT IS MY LIFE!



MAGIC...



...IS
EVERYTHING
TO ME!



BOOM!

AHHHHHHH!

NOW
YOU FEEL THE
BOUNDS AS
WELL.

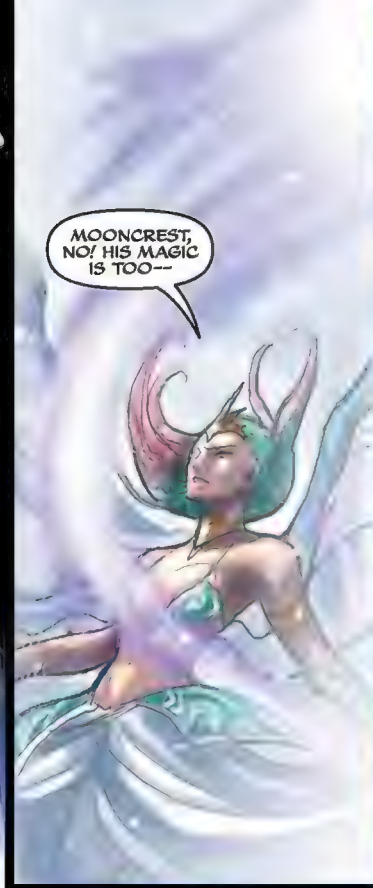
ACCEPT
YOUR FATE
NOBLEWOMAN...

...ACCEPT
YOUR
DEATH!

SKRIIEE



ARRGGGH!



MOONCREST,
NO! HIS MAGIC
IS TOO--



MOONCREST!
YOUR
SCALES...!



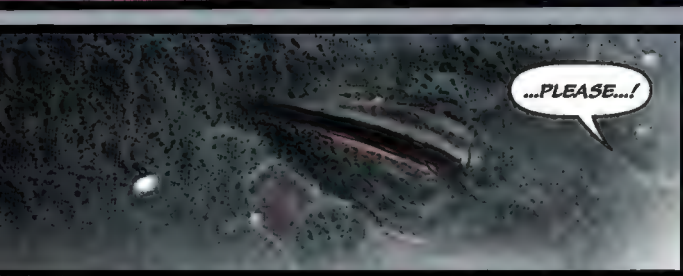


THHUDD

NO!
NOT AGAIN.



MOONCREST!
PLEASE DON'T
DIE...



...PLEASE...!



YES!

YES,
MY LOVE...
COME BACK
TO ME.

IT'S ONLY THE
BEGINNING.

THOSE WORDS WILL
CONTINUE TO HAUNT
ME FOR MANY DAYS
TO COME.

THE WAR BETWEEN THE RAHTUMI
AND THE SETHORII COST COUNTLESS
LIVES... INCLUDING KELSYN'S.

HOWEVER, SOME DID NOT
PERISH, BUT RATHER...
LOST THEIR LIVELIHOOD...
AND THEIR NOBILITY--
I PERSONALLY SAW
TO IT MYSELF.

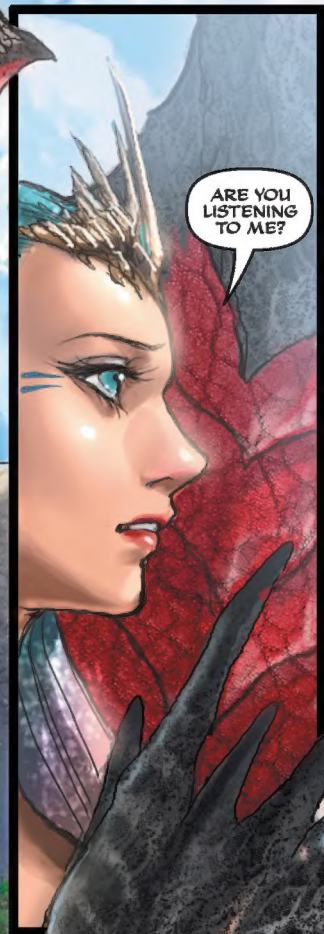
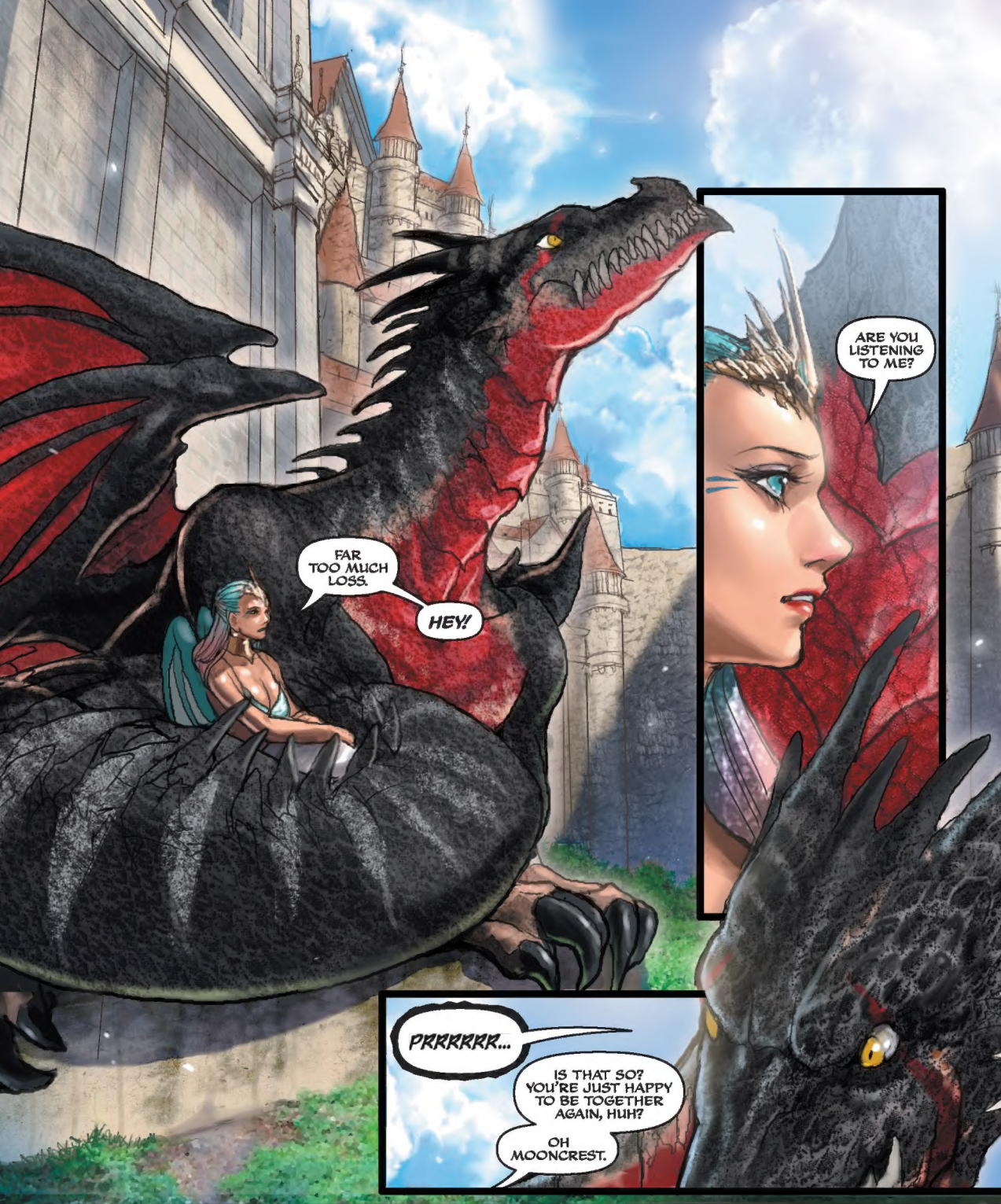


WHILE OTHERS WERE
SHOWN MERCY FOR
WAR SEES FAR TOO
LITTLE FORGIVENESS...

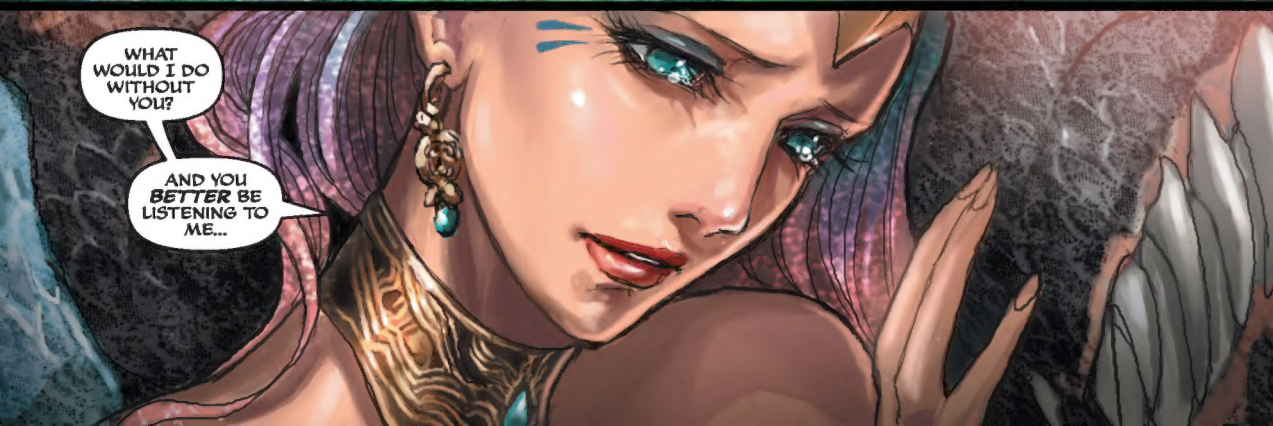


...AND FAR TOO MUCH LOSS.





IS THAT SO?
YOU'RE JUST HAPPY
TO BE TOGETHER
AGAIN, HUH?
OH
MOONCREST.





...BECAUSE
YOU'RE ALL I
HAVE LEFT.